**THE TRANSPERSONAL REVOLUTION**

***Fundamental Principles of Transpersonal***

***Psychology and Philosophy***

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1. History in the Making
2. The Four Waves
3. The Perennial Philosophy
4. Humanistic Psychology
5. Transpersonal Psychology
6. Paradigm Shift
7. Historical Emergence
8. Ego and Enlightenment
9. Darwin and Freud
10. The Existential Revolt
11. Holistic Thinking
12. The Social Self
13. Jung and Psyche
14. Constructivism
15. The Politics of Experience
16. Multiple Intelligence
17. Multimodal Functioning
18. Buddha and *The Gita*
19. Eye of Soul
20. The Alchemy of Therapy
21. The Freud-Jung Dynamic
22. Metamorphosis

Postscript: Cultivating Transpersonal Experience

1. **History in the Making**

In the late 1700s – in the set of provinces known as Prussia, later called Germany – Immanuel Kant helped philosophy break away from theology to become an independent discipline.

The Church had closed Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum in 529. For the next thousand years, philosophy in the West was largely conducted as a subset of religious studies, mainly in the monasteries and, gradually, the few, scattered, theologically dominated universities. With the scientific, philosophic and political revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, philosophy increasingly came into its own.

In the mid-1700s, “the Scottish skeptic,” David Hume, was denied a teaching position in Edinburgh. It was left to Immanuel Kant – “awakened,” he said, from his “dogmatic slumber” by Hume’s skeptical provocations, and benefiting from the expansive funding of Prussian academia by Fredrick the Great – to become the first thinker to hold an academic chair in philosophy since the time of Plato and Aristotle. Kant thus established the precedent which led to the academic luminescence of Fichte, Shelling, Schopenhauer and Hegel, and almost all subsequent Western philosophers.

In the late 1800s, psychology repeated philosophy’s break-away adventure. Just as philosophy had broken from theology, now psychology freed itself from philosophy and became an independent discipline. With Pavlov, James, Freud and Jung – the 19th century progressing into the 20th – psychology sought to establish itself as a respectable science. The scientific paradigm, then as now, dominated the Western *Zeitgeist* as the most trustworthy path to knowledge and truth.

As a subset of philosophy, psychology can of course be traced back to archaic and classical Greece, especially in the ideas of Heraclitus, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

In the brief nineteen years of his astonishing philosophic output – before collapsing into madness in 1889 and dying in 1900 (the year of the publication of Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*) – Friedrich Nietzsche was a poetizing philosopher-psychologist: an atheistic *Ubermenschean* “pragmatist” who seemingly embraced the materialistic naturalism of the scientific paradigm.

Yet Nietzsche also thundered against science becoming a new god, replacing religion as the absolute according to which truth is measured. Scientific dogmatism, he argued, is merely inverted metaphysics.

Truth, Nietzsche said, is “a mobile army of metaphors” – an ever receding infinity of mystery, in the face of which the best that humans can hope for is a plurality of interpretations. Nietzsche’s “pragmatist” doctrine of knowledge is called “perspectivism.”

As a philosophic archeologist of the psyche, Nietzsche, echoing Hume and Buddha while foreshadowing James, asserts that Descartes’ *cogito* – what Freud and Jung call “ego” – is a fiction: a narratizing tale spun from the vibrating web of experience; a story we tell ourselves about ourselves, based largely on what we hear about ourselves from others.

Despite Nietzsche’s embrace of Newtonian science and Darwinian evolution – humans, he said, are simply “clever animals” – he nevertheless provides most of the ideas which, with Freud and Jung, became the foundations of “depth psychology.” Indeed, Freud supposedly remarked: “I ceased reading Nietzsche lest there be nothing left to discover.”

1. **The Four Waves**

20th century psychology exhibits four successive waves:

1. behavioral psychology
2. depth psychology
3. existential**/**humanistic “third force” psychology
4. transpersonal psychology.

The first wave began at the very end of the 19th century, behaviorism established by Pavlov’s Russian experiments with stimulus/response conditioning, and furthered by William James founding an experimental psychological “laboratory” at Harvard.

Before becoming famous as one of the founders of philosophic pragmatism, James was already famous in America for his 1890 two-volume classic, *Principles of Psychology*; and, in the scientific spirit of his time, James called his methodology “functional psychology.”

Following so quickly as to be almost simultaneous, depth psychology – with an empirical emphasis on therapy – hit the world stage with Freudian psychoanalysis.

Breaking away from Freud’s obsession with sex – his erotic reductionism – Jung developed his own “Analytic Psychology,” contrasting his teleological emphasis on self-actualization with Freud’s regressive and libidinous determinism.

Freudian psychology is not, of course, devoid of teleology. Therapy is, after all, goal oriented. The aim of therapy is to help the client become healthier; to enable him or her to cope – in the midst of a complex web of familial, business and social relationships – in a less neurotic, more adequate way. Freud famously declares that the purpose of psychoanalysis is “to enable a person to love and to work.”

Yet the fact remains: for Freud, the key to therapy is anamnesis of childhood trauma. His method is primarily regressive; he looks to the past to heal the present for the sake of the future.

In contrast, Jungian therapy is essentially progressive. It explores the present condition of the client’s psyche for clues to a healthy future, including meaningful work and the actualization of untapped potential. Perhaps the most explicit example of the difference between Freud and Jung – apart from Freud’s libidinous atheism in contrast to Jung’s mystic spirituality – is their approach to dream interpretation. For Freud, dreams primarily provide clues about the past. For Jung, dreams primarily provide clues about the future.

Jungian psychology anticipates, and helps lay the foundation for, both humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Alfred Adler may largely be credited for founding group psychology.

We should also note that William James, in his comprehensive exploration of *Varieties of Religious Experience*, foreshadows the Jungian and transpersonal concern with altered states of consciousness, varieties of religious epiphany, the human potential movement, and – in Asian terms – the enlightenment project.

Building on the philosophic explorations of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre, and the Jungian and Heideggerian influenced “existential psychiatry” of Ludwig Binswanger, Canadian American psychologist Abraham Maslow – along with Carl Rogers, Victor Frankl and Rollo May – launched the third wave in psychology, which Maslow called the “third force.”

The first wave, behaviorism, was a force for scientific materialism, based on behavioral conditioning through pleasure and pain and the empirical measurements of stimulus and response.

The second wave, “depth psychology,” epitomized by Freud and Jung, was largely concerned with psychopathology: the understanding and therapeutic overcoming of neurosis and psychosis.

The third wave, humanistic psychology, broke from the scientific paradigm embraced by psychology’s pioneers. It focused instead on issues like stress and alienation, developing holistic methods for a client’s rediscovery of meaning in life, and cultivating coping mechanisms for sustaining enthusiasm and faith.

Humanistic psychology focused less on the overcoming of pathology and more on the self-actualizing maximization of psychological health and well-being.

This coincided with Aldous Huxley’s inauguration of the “human potential movement” and his groundbreaking book on *The Perennial Philosophy*.

The combination of humanistic psychology and the human potential movement led to increasing interest in what Jean Houston calls “the possible human;” i.e., to the fourth wave: transpersonal psychology, with its emphasis on interbeing and macrocosmic consciousness.

To explore the fundamental principles of transpersonal psychology, let’s look at what Huxley says about the essential elements of “the perennial philosophy.”

As a preliminary, we sketch the difference between horizontal and vertical transpersonalism.

This in turn opens the way to appreciating the influence of evolutionary biology, the sociality and development of the psyche, and the holographic paradigm shift launched by quantum physics.

1. **The Perennial Philosophy**

Huxley’s vision, with its emphasis on spirit, exemplifies the vertical aspect of transpersonalism.

Transpersonal verticality – a “divine,” ontological, multi-layered nestedness, typically known as “the great chain of being” – *includes* the horizontal aspect.

The horizontal character of transpersonalism refers to the interbeing of the so-called “natural” world: the holistic interdependence of material forms, from quantum particles to molecular aggregates to cellular organisms to human societies to the biosphere, solar system, galaxies, the universe.

Huxley articulates four fundamental attributes of the perennial philosophy. In his own words:

1. The phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness … is the manifestation of a Divine Ground. …
2. Human beings are capable not merely of knowing *about* the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. …
3. [Human beings] possess a double nature, a phenomenal ego and [a Kierkegaardian “infinite inwardness” of] spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul.
4. [Human] life on earth has … one [primary] end and purpose: to identify [egoic self-awareness] with [the infinitely expansive awareness of the soul] and so come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground.

Huxley concludes: “The Perennial Philosophy and its ethical corollaries constitute a Highest Common Factor, present in all the major religions of the world. To affirm this truth has never been more … necessary than at the present time.” (Chapter 34: “The Perennial Philosophy,” in *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*; edited by Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan; Tarcher/Putnam Publishers; Penguin Putnam Inc., New York; 1993; pages 212-213)

Huxley’s description of the perennial philosophy overlaps with Romanticism in the Western philosophic tradition.

It overlaps, in Asia, with the Vedantic heart of Hinduism, the compassionate interbeing of Buddhism, and many aspects of Taoism.

In the West, metaphysical idealism – with its emphasis on the primacy of mind over matter – has its roots in Plato and Plotinus, and reappears in Spinoza, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Icons of the panentheistic and Romantic –i.e., mystic and poetic – aspects of metaphysical idealism include Meister Eckhart, Rumi, Goethe, Coleridge, Emerson, Wordsworth and Tagore. The most sophisticated modern system of idealist metaphysics, with panentheistic and Romantic overtones, remains the “process philosophy” of Alfred North Whitehead.

Huxley’s cautionary emphasis on a new global ethic – “never … more … necessary than at … present” – echoes H. G. Wells’ early 20th century declaration: “History is more and more a race between education and catastrophe.”

Wells is echoing Kant: “We live in an age of enlightenment, but we do not yet live in an enlightened age.”

In short, transpersonalism is part of the “global mind change” – the paradigm shift –necessary for survival. In Buckminster Fuller’s words: “There are no passengers on spaceship earth. We are all members of the crew.”

The environmental movement, also known as The Gaia Movement, is a vital part of the global mind change articulated in the transpersonal vision. To protect and sustain a healthy biosphere, we must move from an *ego*centric to an *eco*centric mentality; from anthropocentric hubris to macrocosmic awareness. Hence Thich Nhat Han seeks to introduce “interbeing” into our vocabulary, and the Dalai Lama consistently calls for “a common religion of kindness.”

In the spirit of Martin Buber’s “I and Thou,” the transpersonal vision urges a primacy of cooperation over competition. In the spirit of Rousseau, Kant and Marx, the transpersonal vision urges our public institutions – educational, economic and political – to emphasize human dignity over private profit.

Hence the call for sanity and compassionate common sense by Wells and Huxley. Accordingly, in both its vertical and horizontal aspects, the transpersonal vision – with its emphasis on interbeing, humility, awakening and compassion – calls for an educational revolution and a global overcoming of religious exclusivism. In psychological terms, and with an eye to unitive instead of separative thinking, the enlightenment project may loosely be described as “the spiritualization of ego.”

1. **Humanistic Psychology**

Existential, third force, humanistic psychology was a revolt against the dominance of the scientific paradigm. Affirming distinctly human values, it rebelled against the dehumanizing character of materialist, determinist, mechanistic reductionism.

In cognitive psychology, there is a phenomenon called “The Computational Paradox.” The more that neurophysiologists and cognitive psychologists discover that the brain is like a computer, the more they discover that the brain is *not* like a computer.

Humans are more than atoms in motion. Humans are more than merely, in Nietzsche’s terms, “clever animals.” The psyche is more than simply neurons firing in the brain. We are, in William James’ phrase, “continuous with Something More.” The mid-19th century “founder” of existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard, called this “something more” “infinite inwardness.” Out of this infinite inwardness comes our personal and cultural creativity. Humans are value-seeking, value-creating, drive-driven, meaning-making, linguistic, tool-using, social, symbolizing, project pursuing, co-creative artists. In existential terms, humans are walking question marks. In transpersonal terms, humans are the quantum leap in nature whereby nature becomes conscious of itself and seeks to explore its own mysteries.

Humanistic psychology reverses the old saying that “believing is seeing.” As now substantiated by cognitive and developmental psychology, humanistic psychology emphasizes that “believing is seeing.” The quality and flavor of our experience is hugely influenced by our belief-system. Accordingly, humanistic psychology is an in-depth exploration of core assumptions and beliefs. It specializes in belief-alteration. It emphasizes the healing use of imagination and the power of positive thinking.

Existential philosophy explores human being-in-the-world as “ecstatic,” troubled, projective, self-transcending. “Ecstatic” means “self-aware” and “reflective.” “Troubled” means “anxiety-prone.” “Projective” and “self-transcending” are fancy terms for “teleological.” In Heideggerian terms, humans are “thrown” into the world *toward* the future.

Jean-Paul Sartre’s “existential psychology” – indeed, his entire philosophy – takes as its starting point the primacy of our Promethean freedom.

Sartre’s psychology also mirrors the Heideggerian, Jungian emphasis on *futurity*. For Sartre, the key to a human being is his or her projects: their plans, hopes and expectations, each of which signifies a unifying feeling of goal-directedness in life. It is this core project which largely provides life with meaning. The loss of such meaning, and the consequent feelings of alienation, are a deep concern in existential psychotherapy, which specializes in the restoration of meaningful purpose.

Humanistic, third-force therapy thus often involves a cognitive-emotive restructuring of core assumptions, beliefs and expectations; and, in so doing, it is happy to utilize the fruits of neuro-linguistic programming.

NLP – influenced by the idea that “neurons that fire together wire together” – involves the conscious restructuring of one’s habitual thinking and speech patterns.

Building on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and the existential psychiatry of Jung’s student, colleague and companion, Ludwig Binswanger, humanistic psychology is holistic and gestalt oriented. Flexibly employing a multiplicity of methods, combining behavioral therapy and cognitive restructuring, it overcomes a) the Cartesian distinction between mind and body, and b) the divorce between thought and feeling. All mentality is not only conditioned by bodily states, it also necessarily contains emotional flavor. One can no more divorce mood from mind than one can remove color from a rainbow.

Human reality, internally as well as externally, is a social network. The ego, rather than being a discrete, unified entity, is a complex web of shifting voices and personae. Humanistic psychology applies itself therapeutically to the integration, the harmonious functioning, of internal personality fragments. The earliest chief exponent of this idea was the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, a contemporary and acquaintance of Freud and Jung.

Assagioli lived from 1888 to 1974. He called his psychotherapeutic model “psychosynthesis.” Like Jung, he foreshadowed humanistic and transpersonal psychology; and, in fact, he sometimes used the word “transpersonal.”

In sum, humanistic psychology addresses itself to feelings of alienation, fragmentation, and low self-esteem. Humanistic psychology is “existential” inasmuch as it concentrates on human meaning and purpose.

It employs a variety of methods for encouraging maximum health and well-being; and, in so doing, humanistic psychologists became increasingly fascinated with what Abraham Maslow calls “peak experiences” and Stanislav Grof calls “altered states of consciousness.” This was the beginning of the transpersonal movement. Transpersonal psychology specializes in the exploration of the extraordinary.

1. **Transpersonal Psychology**

If in fact, as has often been said, we normally use only about ten percent of the brain’s actual capacity, transpersonal psychology explores breakthroughs into utilizing the other ninety percent. In the Toltec shamanism of the Carlos Castaneda books, this often involves a shift in “the assemblage point” – a new way of synthesizing the body-heart-mind gestalt, opening into paranormal dimensions of experience.

A Hindu-Buddhist parallel is the opening of the *ajna* chakra: the “third eye” in the center of the forehead. This is another way of referring to what the East has long called “enlightenment.” In the West, this is exemplified in the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato; in the “transcendent” experiences of Meister Eckhart, George Fox and William Blake; and in the “transcendental” poetics of Emerson, Wordsworth, Whitman and Thoreau.

In sum, transpersonal psychology – building on humanistic, cognitive and developmental psychology, and with a social approach to evolutionary biology (i.e., sociobiology) – indicates a Western resurgence of intense interest in gnosticism, mysticism, shamanism, yoga, tantra, Taoism, and the multimodal, multiverse theories of Buddhism.

Sometimes called “noetic science,” *trans*personalism emphasizes the “trans” – the breakthrough into transcendent, multidimensional experience; a return to our innate *meta-nature*; a recapturing of the awesome sanity we were born with; a unifying openness to macrocosmic wholeness and interbeing.

All of this resonates, of course, with what Aldous Huxley called “the perennial philosophy.”

Robert McDermott provides a glimpse into the transition from humanistic to transpersonal:

Transpersonal psychology originated … modestly … from a small group of psychologists in the San Francisco Bay Area who wanted to distinguish their psychological theories and practices from humanistic psychology. …

Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, and Stanislav Grof had been the primary founders of the humanistic psychology movement, and then in collaboration with colleagues [including R. D. Laing] initiated a new … movement for which Stanislav Grof provided the name “transpersonal.”

Transpersonal psychologists had lived happily in the community of humanistic psychology for approximately a decade [in the mid-1950s and early ‘60s] before they began to focus less on what they held in common with the humanistic worldview – a need to break the hold of a dehumanizing reductionism – and more on all that remains omitted from the humanistic conception of human experience. (Chapter 33: “Transpersonal Worldviews: Historical and Philosophical Reflections;” *Paths Beyond Ego*; p. 207)

McDermott continues:

In philosophical terms, the emphasis on the extraordinary indicates that transpersonalists tend to be closer to Plato than to Aristotle, … closer to Hegel than to Hume, closer to James than to Dewey, closer to the Taoists than to the Confucians, closer to the Vedantists, Sufis, Buddhists, and mystics of all varieties than to traditional religious experience. … The transpersonal movement … has drawn most comfortably from Buddhist theory and practice. With almost all forms of Buddhism, transpersonalism tends to value healing practices in response to *dukkha* (the pain of existence) without attachment to a particular ontology. (*Paths Beyond Ego*, 208)

The “trans” in “transpersonal” means both “beyond” and “through.” Transpersonal adventures *go beyond* the normal sensory and egoic boundaries of everyday experience; and this is often felt as a sense of transcendental forces operating *through* individualized personhood.

Transpersonal experience can, therefore, be called meta-egoic. There occurs a transcendence of – a going beyond – the everyday sense of emotive mentality trapped inside a body.

This does not necessarily mean that the ego, the sense of personal identity, is shattered, unraveled, disappeared. More often than not, it means that egoic identity is expanded to include previously unimagined inclusiveness in profound aspects of the macrocosmic. The ego becomes diaphanous, enfolded in openness to the multidimensional.

Accordingly, Buddhism makes a distinction between provisional reality and ultimate reality, and defines the truth of human being as their dialectical interplay. Thus Buddhism also speaks of provisional truth and ultimate truth.

Although Buddha articulated a doctrine of *anatman* – no-self or no-soul – this has too often been misunderstood as a complete denial of egoic identity or personal selfhood. Buddha’s point, rather, is that selfhood is intrinsically diaphanous; a process instead of a thing; not rigidly separated from the rest of the universe and its vast multiplicity of dimensions.

While Buddhist personhood must be understood in terms of interbeing, Buddhism’s existential emphasis on individuality, personal growth, freedom, choice and responsibility is fully explicit in, and required by, the doctrine of karma and its necessary correlate: reincarnational continuity. The Buddhist doctrine of karma is an Indian reflection of the statement attributed to Jesus: “As you sow, so shall you reap.”

Buddhist psychology asserts that most human suffering arises out of ignorance of our natural, essential, indisputable interbeing. Suffering emerges from excessive attachment to the sense of separateness. Buddhism is essentially a pedagogy: a path to the overcoming of suffering caused by separative thinking. Buddhism is thus fundamentally therapeutic, and necessarily ethical. The enlightenment project – the direct experience of I and Thou – posits the unity of wisdom and compassion.

This is why, for example, Buddha, Gandhi and Einstein were devoted to peace-making. The meaning of life is learning and service.

If the “tans” in “transpersonal” means “going beyond” the ordinary into experience of the transcendent, it also means opening to the experience of transcendent forces operating “through” egoic personhood.

As process philosophy of interbeing, Buddhist and transpersonal psychology overlap with what is called “quantum entanglement” in the new physics

Quantum entanglement is simply the scientific discovery of the I-Thou-Interbeing at the heart of what Huxley calls the perennial philosophy. If dualism – separative thinking – is the fatal flaw of civilization, it may rightfully be said that quantum physics, Buddhism and transpersonal psychology offer a “new” model of nature and human reality, reflected in the alchemical maxim: “the microcosm mirrors the macrocosm.”

McDermott observes: “The ‘trans’ in transpersonal refers to a crossing over precisely to the kind of reality, to the kinds of experiences, which are ordinarily ruled to be philosophically [and scientifically and socially] inadmissible.” (*Paths Beyond Ego*, 208) Transpersonal psychology and philosophy are part of the contemporary paradigm shift which simultaneously offers something new and yet, ironically, is simply a reawakening to the wisdom of the ages. In particular:

The philosophic mindset of transpersonalism is … continuous with the creative genius of the nineteenth-century artists and thinkers who celebrated the infinite, the interior, and the intriguing relationship between ancient and modern. The most well-established general term for this philosophical attitude is Romanticism, the worldview that emerged in the eighteenth century and flourished in the nineteenth as a reaction against scientific rationalism [with its tendency toward Newtonian, mechanistic, materialist reductionism]. Transpersonalism is … related to Romanticism as … a variation on [a] theme. …

Romanticism and transpersonalism … are essentially a commitment to a larger, more interior and transformative view of human experience, and in this respect both are committed to a highly participatory rather than a spectator theory of knowledge. (McDermott, *Paths Beyond Ego*, 209-210)

McDermott concludes his essay by suggesting that transpersonal psychology and philosophy respond to three specific challenges.

First: “A systematic and richly textured portrait of the human being in the light of nonordinary experiences.” (*PBE*, 212)

I suggest that this has been artfully accomplished by the ten Carlos Castaneda books, which provide a “richly textured portrait” of his initiation into Toltec shamanism. Humans are described therein as “luminous eggs” with largely untapped multimodal abilities.

The Buddhist distinction between relative, provisional reality and ultimate, absolute reality is paralleled by the Toltec distinction between “tonal” and “nagual.”

In the Buddhist and Toltec phenomenologies, the “ultimate” or “nagual” dimension not only permeates, and is the ground and foundation for, the “provisional” realm of everyday “tonal” experience, it is itself an infinite mystery: a complex, sophisticated, highly coordinated, barely imaginable web of vibratory forces, for which no claim to final comprehension is made. Which is to say: even the word “ultimate” is be understood as “provisional,” though of course far exceeding the “relative” reality of normal, everyday, egoic-sensory, one-dimensional experience.

Second: “A critical evaluation of nonordinary states in the light of the evolution of consciousness.” (*PBE*, 212)

I suggest this has been accomplished with extraordinary lucidity and metaphysical sophistication by the dozen or so Seth books by Jane Roberts, including perhaps most especially *Seth Speaks* and *Adventures in Consciousness*.

A more diffuse elaboration of “nonordinary states” and the “evolution of consciousness” may be found in the vast literature of Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism; and in the Alice Bailey books channeling the Tibetan mahatma Djwhal Khul, with special attention to *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire,* *A Treatise on White Magic*, and his two volumes on *Esoteric Psychology*.

Third: “A careful review of implications of nonordinary states for ethics, particularly for the morality of ecology, community life, and interpersonal relations.” (*PBE*, 212)

I suggest these issues are richly explicated in Mahayana Buddhism as “the way of the bodhisattva,” and, again, in the Seth books. In both sets of literature, wisdom and compassion are two names for the same. Philosophy – the enlightenment project – is the journey from the love of wisdom to the wisdom of love.

For Buddhism and Seth, karma is a cosmic fact; and co-creative evolutionary interbeing provides the cosmological context.

Human life is the soul’s playground for learning to create responsibly, both individually and collectively. Earth is a school, a training ground, for evolving consciousness. The word “Buddha” means “awake.” Transpersonal psychology and philosophy articulate a path to awakening.

Transpersonalism might thus be construed as “A Renaissance of The Renaissance.” Instead of sleepwalking through history, enraptured by the shadows in Plato’s cave, we can devote ourselves to creating a peaceable kingdom worth bequeathing to our children.

What Kant said of the 18th century applies equally today: “We live in an age of enlightenment, but we do not yet live in an enlightened age.”

Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan, the editors of *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*, put the matter this way:

While evidence of our intellectual and technological genius is all around us, there is growing concern that in other ways we have seriously underestimated ourselves. In part because of the blinding brilliance of our technological triumphs we have distracted and dissociated ourselves from our inner world, sought outside for answers than can only be found within, denied the subjective and the sacred, overlooked latent capacities of mind, imperiled our planet, and [for far too long we have] lived in a collective trance – a contracted, distorted state of mind that goes unrecognized because we share it and take it to be normality.

There exist within us, however, latent but unexplored creative capacities, depths of psyche, states of consciousness, and stages of development undreamed of by most people. Transpersonal disciplines have emerged to explore these possibilities, and they emerged first in psychology. (*PBE*, “Introduction,” p. 1)

Walsh and Vaughan observe that transpersonal awareness seeks to “inspire compassionate concern for humankind and the earth,” in contrast to “the individual, social, and global pathology that surrounds and threatens us.” (*PBE*, 8)

They assert that “two key implications follow: higher states of consciousness – states in which people have capacities above and beyond the usual – may be available to us all. And our usual state of consciousness, which we usually assume to be the best, is actually suboptimal.” (*PBE*, 9)

The situation is critical. We are in the midst of a battle for the soul of the world. Transpersonal awareness provides hope for a saner future. Walsh and Vaughan conclude:

Transpersonal disciplines … draw attention to a neglected, misunderstood family of experiences; provide new understandings of ancient ideas, religious traditions, and contemplative practices; offer more generous views of human nature; and point to unsuspected human possibilities. …

The contemplative and mystical core of the world’s great religions can be seen as multistate traditions for inducing specific transpersonal states of consciousness, especially those states that offer what has been called enlightenment, liberation, or salvation. Contemplative [or yogic and meditative] practices [evoking] liberating states [of awareness and experience] can be regarded … as transpersonal technologies of [i.e., as bio-psychic techniques for] transcendence.

Transpersonal experiences often suggest that there are nonphysical realms of existence of enormous scope. (*PBE*, 7, 9-10)

Jacob Needleman, one of the greatest Western scholars of Eastern wisdom, once observed that Freud “institutionalized the underestimation of human possibility.” If Freud provided a systematic and erotically neurotic analysis of the pathological half of human reality, transpersonal psychology provides a systematic, open-ended exploration of the healthy half, the foundations for which were pioneered by Jung and Assagioli.

We are riding on the cusp of tragedy and breakthrough; negotiating the storm of crisis and awakening; surfing the abyss in fear and trembling toward the shore of illumination. We live in the single most dangerous period of human history *and* in history’s most awesome, adventurous moment.

Those who seek to be pioneers for healing society’s ills become, for the most part, media free; commit to self-actualizing self-transcendence; and cultivate the art of voluntary simplicity.

Walsh and Vaughan, in their “Introduction” to *Paths Beyond Ego*, note that “transpersonal disciplines espouse no creed or dogma, demand no particular religious convictions, … and usually assume that transpersonal experiences can be interpreted either religiously or nonreligiously according to individual preference.” (p. 6)

1. **Paradigm Shift**

To work our way further into the paradigm shift toward a transpersonal solution to our planetary crisis, let’s turn to Walter Truett Anderson’s *The Next Enlightenment: Integrating East and West in a New Vision of Human Evolution*.

Anderson’s book keeps faith with the best of the Spirit of The Sixties, and thus contributes to a “Renaissance of The Renaissance.” It continues a train of thought evidenced in Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics*, Willis Harman’s *Global Mind Change*, Jean Huston’s *The Possible Human*, Michael Talbot’s *The Holographic Universe*, Norman Friedman’s *Bridging Science and Spirit*, Wayne Teasdall’s *The Mystic Heart*, George Leonard’s *Education and Ecstasy*, Graham Smetham’s *Quantum Buddhism*, Nitin Trasi’s *The Science of Enlightenment*, and the autobiographical trinity of Hank Wesselman’s breakthrough into transpersonal anthropology: *Medicine Maker, Spirit Walker, Vision Seeker*.

Anderson’s book also resonates with the transpersonal biology pioneered by Rupert Sheldrake. Sheldrakes’s notions of “morphic resonance” and “morphogenetic fields” explicate biopsychic interbeing, overlap with the concept of “group awareness,” develop the notion of “species consciousness,” and offer a biological parallel to “quantum entanglement” in postmodern physics.

Let’s recall that “transpersonal” means transcendence in the sense of *going beyond* egoic personhood, and also indicates opening to transcendent forces operating in, on and *through* egoic personhood. Let’s recall that Kant defines enlightenment as “liberation from our self-imposed immaturity.” Goethe said: “Few people have the imagination for reality.”

Goethe also said, echoing Plato: “Science arose from poetry. … When times change, the two can meet again on a higher level as friends.”

Anticipating the transpersonal movement, William Blake said: “The paranormal is normal.”

Karma teaches that experience is: a mirror of creativity and belief. It is thus best to remember that *forces are more important than personalities*.

The transpersonal vision is heart-centered rationality. It is unitive and holistic in essence, with awareness of the limits of language and reason. The intellect can no more verbalize or conceptualize ultimate reality than we can throw a rope around infinity. The transpersonal vision is rooted in awe at the infinity of mystery.

The transpersonal worldview is not “other-worldly.” It is thoroughly pragmatic. To be in the world but not of it means being in the world with a sense of grace; making space for transcendence in the flux of here and now.

Walt Whitman said: “I contain multitudes.” Sri Aurobindo declared: “Evolution of consciousness is the central motive of terrestrial existence.” Carl Sagan observed: “Man is a transitional animal, not the crown of creation.” Albert Einstein said: “The most beautiful and profound emotion that we can experience is the sensation of the mystical.”

Toward the beginning of *The Next Enlightenment*, Anderson reminds us that the transpersonal revolution is a reawakening of the mystic wisdom of Platonism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, shamanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Judeo-Christian-Islamic esotericism.

The mystic heart of this multiplicity is what Aldous Huxley intends with his “perennial philosophy.” Anderson elaborates:

The basic proposition of these traditions is that everyday consciousness – the I-centered monologue we all run most of the time, the sense of looking out from inside our heads at an external and separate world – may be quite adequately adjusted to society, but it is somehow out of touch with the universe.

And not only out of touch with the universe, but, in a sense, out of touch with ourselves, the larger dimensions of our being …. (St. Martin’s Press; New York; 2003; p. 2)

Toward the end of his book, Anderson highlights the importance of the transpersonal revolution by raising the crucial question: “What is to be done?”

His answer : “Bring the whole subject of enlightenment into the mainstream of Western thought so that people can understand it and relate it to their own life experience in whatever way makes sense for them.” (208)

Anderson concludes: “In time, the way of being in the world known as enlightenment will become the new common sense. We will not know this has happened – that we have proceeded from an age of enlightenment into an enlightened age – until we see that people have ceased beating one another to death over stale dogmas and fictitious identities.” (242)

Anderson quotes Nitin Trasi’s *The Science of Enlightenment*: “Perhaps, one hopes, the day is not far off when the phenomena of Enlightenment and Liberation may be found included in the standard medical texts of psychology – and a Liberated or Enlightened person is seen not as a freak of Nature, but as the most normal, sane, uncomplicated human being that there can be.” (191)

Trasi’s insightful sentiment is, of course, the basic message of Zen, stretching back through 2500 years of empirical verification to Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni Buddha’s meditative enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree.

Enlightenment is – in Platonic terms – Socratic escape from the cave of stupefying enchantment with the superficial.

Hence Kant’s definition of enlightenment as “liberation from our self-imposed immaturity;” Chogyam Trungpa’s call to “recapture the sanity we were born with;” and Abraham Maslow’s urging an individual and collective movement from suboptimal socialized infantilism to the self-actualizing peaks of self-transcendence.

Anderson describes his discourse on “the next enlightenment” as addressing the personal and social “struggle toward freedom and sanity.” (4) The transpersonal revolution offers an old-new model of human reality, providing a bridge to a saner, more compassionate, more subjectively pioneering future.

Anderson asserts: “I won’t go all the way with the famous Socratic pronouncement that the unexamined life is not worth living – hell, any life is worth living – but would rather say that the unexamined life is not fully lived.” (5)

The transpersonal revolution is part of the necessary bridge-building toward a more enlightened, more egalitarian culture. The enlightenment project is also an evolutionary project. The call for a quantum leap in personal and social advance may be described as “the evolution-enlightenment thesis.” (9) It involves what Nietzsche called a collective “transvaluation of values.” Nietzsche’s phrase is simply a fancy way of saying that we desperately need to reorder our priorities.

Anderson highlights the challenge: “We remain largely ego-ridden people in ego-ridden societies that school us in delusion from kindergarten onward … and elevate the most … heroically deluded to the highest levels of wealth and power.” (8)

And yet, Anderson notes, “breakthrough is close to the heart’s most passionate desire.” (8) Heart-centered rationality – the call of conscience – secretly troubles us “like a splinter in the brain” (to quote Morpheus in the movie “The Matrix”). Anderson’s own mini-enlightenment – his first breakthrough into the enlightenment experience – came at the age of thirty and brought feelings of tremendous relief. The irony, he says, “the most mysterious part of the experience, [was that] I had not been particularly aware of anything that I needed to be relieved from.” (10)

Extrapolating from that experience, we ponder Noam Chomsky’s immortal maxim: “The problem is not that people don’t know; it’s that they don’t know they don’t know.”

Chomsky’s insight is mirrored in Howard Zinn’s *Declarations of Independence*, which seeks to historically inform an American citizenry socialized into ignorance and artfully manipulated by Weapons of Mass Dysfunction: deception, distortion, distraction. Zinn announces that America is a high-tech version of Plato’s cave. He declares: “The truth is so often the opposite of what we are told that we can no longer turn our heads around far enough to see it.”

If there is cause for despair, there is also cause for hope. Despite the forces arrayed against enlightenment, there is a paradigm shift at work, a global mind change whose groundswell we are just beginning to glimpse.

Despite the flood of superficiality and disinformation, the internet remains a potentially globalizing force for collective awakening.

On the other side of the now foreseeable breakdown of tragically entrenched business-as-usual, it is possible to imagine a festive, ecological, egalitarian, world community.

1. **Historical Emergence**

As the pace of change increases – now exponentially – it is worth pausing to reflect on the last four centuries of Western progress. They provide clues to what we may anticipate for the 21st century.

Let’s keep in mind the remark of Arnold Toynbee, the great British historian who, upon completion of his twelve-volume inquiry into world civilizations, *A Study of History*, remarked: “When future historians look back at the twentieth century, they will say its single most important event was the introduction of Buddhism to the West.”

Anderson articulates five major events in the modern Western progress toward a transpersonal worldview:

1) the 18th century Enlightenment;

2) the 19th century discovery of evolutionary biology; and, in the 20th century:

3) psychoanalysis;

4) existentialism;

5) the human potential movement.

We may associate an iconic name with each of these pivot points: Kant, Darwin, Freud, Heidegger, and Maslow.

It has been noted that the idea of “progress” was invented in, and is a legacy of, the 18th century. Prior to the Enlightenment, time was, generally speaking, considered merely repetitive.

People thought: “Today is more or less like yesterday; and tomorrow will be like today. This is more or less the way the way it’s always been; this is the way it always will be.”

Upheavals – natural disasters, invasions, regime changes – did of course occur; but life always settled, relatively speaking, back into its repetitive patterns.

The one qualification to this perpetual repetition-of-the-same was the notion found in both Greek and Hindu mythological metaphysics. This was the idea that time revolves in great circles, beginning with a Golden Age, then proceeding into epochs – usually three – of increasing disintegration and decay; until, finally, the great cycle begins again, only to be repeated … endlessly.

The 15th and 16th century voyages across oceans brought about the European discovery of new lands and peoples; almost literally, “new worlds.” The 17th century scientific revolution, combined with international commerce and the serious fracture of traditional religious and political authority, opened up new horizons of personal and social possibility.

All this novelty climaxed in the 18th century Enlightenment, with scientific and technological advances, the American and French revolutions, new philosophic conceptions of reality and truth, and Immanuel Kant’s “*Sapere aude!*” – “Dare to know!” – encouraging individuals to think for themselves. Kant’s motto for the Enlightenment was a logical climax to Descartes’ early 17th century “methodical doubt,” Newton’s late 17th century new vision of the cosmos, and the mid-18th century skepticism of Voltaire and Hume.

The 18th century crystallized the idea that life *can* get better and it will. Reason was on the march, opening up new horizons of religious, political and economic freedom. With increased educational opportunity, political liberty, and scientific and technological advance, how could the future not be better than the past?

The old idea that human epochs decayed from best to worst was now being reversed. In the early 19th century, Hegel’s German “idealism” offered a phenomenology of history that showed (seemingly) the inevitability of progress, from primitivism and superstition to increasing self-awareness, cooperative community, and enlightenment. Romanticism added the idea that the infinite can be daily glimpsed in the finite.

Then, in 1859, with *The Origin of Species*, Darwin offered a comprehensive theory of biological evolution. Then, in 1900, Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Darwin offered a strictly biological version of human reality, the climax of eons of “natural selection.” Freud, embracing the biological model, added depth psychology, showing that geological frontiers were now matched by unknown, “unconscious,” inward frontiers of the psyche.

Nietzsche and Heidegger offered existentialist examinations of human being-in-the-world – exploring anxiety, alienation, finitude, and *Ubermenschean* authenticity – philosophically reopening the question of Being in general and human being in particular.

By the 1960s and ‘70s, Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, R. D. Laing, Abraham Maslow and others in the “human potential movement” had combined humanistic psychology with Asian spirituality to present a new vision of human possibility: the open-ended, ever expanding, transpersonal revolution, also called “the evolutionary-enlightenment project.”

We should pause to note that the years 1900 to 1915 may have been *the most intellectually stimulating*decade and a half in human history. In addition to the groundbreaking work in psychoanalysis provided by Freud and Jung, it offered the quantum revolution in physics; the first formulation of relativity theory; a phenomenological and linguistics revolution in philosophy; and, in North America, the first systematic anthropological research into aboriginal cultures, including field studies and daily contact with Native American tribal communities.

Anthropology announced a revolutionary thesis which echoed Rousseau: aboriginal cultures are not necessarily more primitive, mythological, superstitious or savage than the civilization of white Christians; they are simply different, equally human, and in many ways more noble: equanimitous, egalitarian, holistic, eco-sensitive, self-sufficient.

As the theories of quantum physics were increasingly confirmed throughout the 20th century, and as the fairly novel notions of enlightenment and quantum leaps in personal evolution melded with Buddhism’s introduction to the West (including Taoism and Zen), the transition from humanistic psychology to the human potential movement led naturally to a transpersonal worldview.

The transpersonal vision synthesizes process and field-theory philosophy, holistic and multi-state psychology, Vedantic Hinduism, homeopathic and traditional Chinese healing, holographic physics, voluntary simplicity, shamanism, mysticism, ecology, and a multiverse reformulation of The Great Chain of Being.

*Nous* is Greek for “mind.” Hence that contemporary branch of transpersonal psychology called “noetic science.”

*Metanoia* is Greek for “enlightenment.” Hence Plato speaks, in *The Republic*, of “the turning about of the eye of the soul” – away from the daily affairs and sensory distractions of incarnation, back toward the soul’s divine origin.

Plato’s “turning about of the eye of the soul” mirrors “the turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness” in Buddha’s discourse in *The Lankavatara Sutra*. Plato and Buddha both define enlightenment as “recollection.”

This Platonic/Buddhist anamnesis mirrors the Hebraic remembering of our “Adamic being,” and, in Hinduism, ego’s awakening to Atman’s unity with Brahman. This is the yoga, the “yoking,” of individualized consciousness with cosmic consciousness. The Hindu terms for enlightenment – *moksha* and *mukti* – mirror the Japanese Zen Buddhist terms: *kensho* and *satori*. *Metanoia*, *moksha* and *satori* go beyond the Enlightenment definition of enlightenment. They resonate instead with the Western mystical tradition of *gnosis* as spiritual awakening, as egoic unity with divinity. The Enlightenment definition of enlightenment is liberation from religious and political indoctrination; a breaking free from religious and political authority; an overcoming of religious dogma; a refusal to bow to the “divine right of kings.”

Kant’s “liberation from self-imposed immaturity” is an overcoming of superstition; an awakening to the freedom to think for oneself; an embrace of rationality and scientific pioneering, rich with potential for social justice. The Enlightenment thinker Baron d’Holbach – a mid-18th century contemporary of Hume and Rousseau, and a devout atheist who nevertheless echoes Buddha – insisted that “men are unhappy only because they are ignorant; they are ignorant only because everything conspires to prevent their being enlightened; they are … wicked only because their reason is not yet sufficiently unfolded.” (Quoted by Anderson, p. 24)

Anderson observes: “The Enlightenment’s exuberant agenda of getting everybody to think rationally, and its assumption that rational thinking would lead straight ahead to a well-ordered society, now seem naïve and simplistic. But it was a productive and courageous liberation movement that boldly took on the twin tyrannies of religious dogma and political power,” thereby setting the stage in the 19th century for Romanticism, Marxism, Darwinism, and the first stirrings of existentialism in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. (34-35)

Hume deconstructed the notion of self, of egoic identity, showing that it is not so much a coherent and continuous entity (an enduring substance, a Cartesian *cogito*) as an abstraction constructed – inferred – from an ever changing flow of sensory and emotional experience. Humean skepticism regarding the existence of an enduring self is the closest Western parallel to the Buddhist notion of *anatman* (no-self). This idea was picked up and argued for by Nietzsche in the fourth quarter of the 19th century. Nietzsche argued that what goes by the name of “self” is largely a trick of language. A few years later, William James argued that the psyche is a “stream of consciousness;” not so much a fixed and enduring entity as a perpetual flow, with various eddies and depths.

Then Freud deconstructed the psyche into id, ego and superego, and argued that a strong sense of egoic identity – call it self-esteem – was necessary for non-neurotic functioning. Neurotic breakdown was more or less cured by the restoration of a healthy ego through psychoanalytic therapy.

John Engler, whom Anderson describes as “a psychologist and teacher of Buddhism,” provides a developmental perspective on ego-functioning similar to Jung’s. This perspective reconciles the apparent tension between Freud on the one hand and Buddha, Hume and Nietzsche on the other.

Anderson summarizes: “As Engler sees it, you have to be somebody before you can be nobody, and the development of a healthy ego at one stage of personal development can be regarded as preparation for letting go of it … at another stage.” (59) Anderson then offers a Jungian description of this process: “The development of the sense of self as a separate individual is the task of the first half of a person’s life, and the integration with the infinite is the [transpersonal] task of” the second half of life. (55)

1. **Ego and Enlightenment**

Herbert Fingarette, a psychologist and distinguished author at the University of California at Santa Barbara, investigated the *feelings* of clients who had successfully completed a program of psychotherapeutic treatment.

Fingarette discovered a paradox. Those feelings – a sense of health and well-being, of functionally adequate strength and peace – could be described in psychoanalytic terms *and* in Buddhist terms.

Fingarette articulated this therapeutic variation on The Computational Paradox in a noted essay entitled “The Ego and Mystic Selflessness.” Anderson summarizes:

In a paper entitled “The Ego and Mystic Selflessness,” one research subject, a woman identified as Katherine, described changes in her emotional responses to Alice, a woman with whom she had once had some stormy personal conflicts. Asked by Fingarette about her present desires in connection with Alice, she replies: “Well, I don’t have any desires now. I used to want Alice to be shown up in her true colors, to have people see how wrong she was. Now I just don’t think about it. I just act. I get along.”

She also discussed her lack of hunger for praise from others, which had formerly been of great importance to her, and said: “All the competition’s sort of left, too. I’m calmer; I don’t try so hard.”

A psychoanalyst or representative of many other schools of Western psychotherapy might respond: “Aha! Katherine’s ego has been strengthened. She now has more self-esteem, a more solid sense of her own value that makes her less threatened by the acts of other people, less needful of praise.”

A follower of Zen or other schools of Eastern thought might respond with equal conviction: “Aha! Katherine’s ego is being extinguished. She is no longer attached to its little dramas, snared into conflict with other people, or concerned about her self-importance. (56-57)

Anderson’s point – and Fingarette’s – is that we don’t have to choose between the psychoanalytic and Zen descriptions. They are seemingly opposed, yet equally valid. One merely needs to see the sense in which both descriptions are true. I call this critical ability “dialectical thinking.” Dialectical thinking is a key factor in the philosophies of Heraclitus, Hegel, Nietzsche and Derrida; it is crucial in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Zen; it is essential in quantum mechanics.

Dialectical thinking is present in the prose and poetry of mystics throughout the ages; and it is equally essential in transpersonal psychology.

Anderson concludes that “the drive toward enlightenment” is, quite simply: “the drive to house the ego in a wider framework of understanding.” (58)

My preferred way to describe this – the psycho-evolutionary enlightenment project – is to say that human reality is a finite infinity. Psychic maturation may be described, as previously noted, as “the spiritualization of ego.” In transpersonal and Buddhist terms, and in the holographic language of quantum physics, it is the realization that provisional reality is the play of ultimate reality. Multiplicity is the spice of life, but unity is the soup. Each ocean wave is separate and distinct; but they are all the ocean waving. Holographic interbeing is the cosmic gestalt, within which the interactive dramas of individualized entities occur. As more and more individuals assume ethical responsibility for our quantum entanglement, our collective interbeing, the more chance of success for a paradigm shift, a global mind change, a transpersonal revolution.

As Karl Marx predicted, those with wealth and power will not easily give up their privilege. Although Marx misunderstood the rise of the middle class as a socially stabilizing force delaying a global proletarian revolution, and could not have predicted the appearance of television as the most powerful indoctrination force in world history, he would not have been surprised that President Ronald Reagan’s legacy to America was the vast expansion of two segments of the population: billionaires and the homeless.

In the 1850s, Marx and Darwin were both living in London. When Darwin’s *Origin* was published, Marx felt that evolutionary biology through natural selection – later popularized by Thomas Huxley as “survival of the fittest” – was a variation on his own theory of “dialectical materialism.” Marx borrowed from Hegel the notion of dialectic: history progressing through contradictions giving rise to syntheses which generated further contradictions and syntheses; stripped Hegelian idealism of its spiritual component; saw Darwinism as confirming his own empiricism; and added that 1) consciousness is a product of conditions of labor, and 2) history is to be understood as the history of class warfare.

Fully aware that history had not in climaxed in Hegel’s Prussian state, Marx predicted the wars and struggles ahead, calling the mega-wealthy captains of industry “blood-sucking vampires.”

In calling for voluntary simplicity and economic egalitarianism, Marx was continuing the basic message of Rousseau a hundred years earlier.

Freud was echoing Marx when, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he referred to “the furies of private interest.”

Freud, like Marx, was an atheistic Jew embracing an empiricist paradigm. But Marx, especially in his 1844 manuscripts, was also an existentialist, borrowing Hegel’s analysis of alienation and giving it an economic spin.

Marx, like Rousseau, was also a forerunner of The Gaia Movement. And, unlike Darwin and Freud, Marx embraced the Hegelian idea of teleology: history pulled forward by a destined ideal.

With an existential, socio-economic, and politically revolutionary variation on the messianic notion of the peaceable kingdom, Marx argued that Hegel’s “slaughter-bench of history” was nevertheless evolving toward a “classless society.”

If Darwin’s biological evolution was pushed by “natural selection,” Marx’s dialectic of history was evolution pulled forward by an ideal socialist destiny.

1. **Darwin and Freud**

Setting Marx aside, we may now take a closer look at the relationship between Darwin and Freud. Anderson elaborates:

It is hard to imagine that there could ever have been a Freud without a Darwin. Freud began his work only a few decades after the [1859] publication of *The Origin of Species* [and Darwin’s subsequent book, *The Descent of Man*, published in 1871], and the whole edifice of psychoanalysis is essentially a story about the problems encountered by an intelligent animal – still with powerful links to its primal past – trying to become a civilized human being. … The Freudian story is not just about the person living within nature and society. It is also about primal nature and modern society coexisting within the person – not entirely harmoniously, either – yet largely beyond the [insight] of the conscious, rational mind that thinks it *is* the person. (50)

Inspired by Darwin, Freud offers a theory of personal evolution. Psychoanalysis combines depth psychology and developmental psychology.

Freud and Jung provide an archeology of the psyche: a logos or narrative which seeks to articulate depths, dynamics and development.

Freud’s “hydraulics model” of the psyche remains more or less Newtonian: atomistic and mechanistic. Jung’s model of the psyche is more quantum-holographic; individualized psyche opens into “collective” fields and archetypal domains.

It is also useful to remember that Freud’s patients were mostly neurotic, treated in the comfort of the consulting room in his house in Vienna. Jung dealt with psychotic patients at the Burgholzli Clinic of Psychiatry in Zurich, Switzerland. On a regular and daily basis, at the Burgholzli asylum, hospital and clinic, Jung treated patients with degrees of madness far beyond Freud’s more modest encounter with psychic breakdown and reintegration.

In Freudian terms: the ego emerges out of the primal clash of id and society; negotiates that “love and strife” dynamic; grows in stages; develops coping mechanisms; and often goes through crises not unlike a snake shedding its skin.

The id is pure primal need. The ego is the conscious attempt to satisfy the needs of the id while negotiating the demands of family and society. This negotiation gives rise to the superego: the internalized voice of social authority.

Says Anderson, the superego “is the individual’s personal police force, censor, and sometime Grand Inquisitor.” (51)

The ego, obliged to repress, and unconsciously sublimate, a variety of instinctual forces, thus becomes a perpetually anxious battleground between the primal demands of the id and the moral demands of the superego.

20th century existentialism arose largely as a new way of understanding human anxiety, returning to the pre-Freudian theme of “alienation” while offering a post-Freudian model of freedom and authenticity. Let us recall the context of Anderson’s discourse. The “next enlightenment,” the transpersonal revolution, emerges from our modern progress through five historical phases, iconically characterized by Kant, Darwin, Freud, Heidegger and Maslow, signifying respectively: the Enlightenment, biological evolution, psychoanalysis, existentialism, and the human potential movement.

The transpersonal exploration of human reality builds upon a series of successive deconstructions of the old notion of self as an isolated, atomic, substantial, coherent, continuing entity. “Man” is no longer the center of creation, nor the crown of creation.

Psychohistorian Bruce Mazlish calls attention to the “three historic smashings” of egoic hubris accomplished by Copernicus, Darwin and Freud. (53) Contributing to what has been called “the fall of self and soul” in modern thought – the deconstruction of individually enduring personhood into a symbolizing, narratizing, socio-linguistic network of forces – were Hume, Nietzsche, Jung, Assagioli, and Wittgenstein.

Says Anderson: “Jung wrote often of the collective unconscious that links all minds at their deeper levels; it is, he said, ‘the foundation of what the ancients called *the* *sympathy of all things*,’” which Pythagoras called “the harmony of the spheres,” postmodern physics calls “quantum entanglement,” and Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh calls “interbeing.”

The scientific deconstruction of “atomism,” and the philosophic and psychological deconstruction of self and soul, name the modern and postmodern dismembering of the Aristotelian, Cartesian, Newtonian notion of independently existing “substances.”

In short: all is process, and everything is interconnected.

We have come full circle back to Lao Tzu, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni Buddha.

1. **Existential Philosophy and Psychology**

Existentialism is embodied by five major figures: Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Additional contributors include Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Paul Tillich. There is also a strong existentialist theme in the works of Carl Jung, Roberto Assagioli, and R. D. Laing. Existentialism is a philosophic tree with two branches: atheistic and mystic-religious.

The atheistic branch is epitomized by Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus. The mystic-religious branch is epitomized by Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Buber.

In the 19th century, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, echoing Rousseau, had independently coined the notion of “herd mentality.”

20th century existentialists, appalled and shaken by the horrors of the first and second world wars, echoed Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in calling for a courageous facing of our individual and collective despair.

Though lacking a systematic doctrine, or anything approaching a unified movement, the existentialists shared a thematic concern with breaking away from the herd – its “bad faith” and mediocrity – and committing instead to the Promethean project of creating an individually *authentic and meaningful* existence.

Anderson offers a succinct summary of the existentialist worldview: “The existentialists had all the skepticism of the Enlightenment ... but none of the optimism, and no confidence whatever in the inevitability of progress. Yet they delivered a powerful and essentially positive message: that we are free … and that it is possible to awaken to this … freedom.” (61)

“Awakening to freedom” is to *create* a meaningful and authentic life despite what Camus calls The Absurd. (61)

“They wanted to draw our attention to the presence and the grandeur of *being*, to awaken us from the slumber of taking [existence] for granted.” (64)

Existentialism embodied a resurgence of the Enlightenment spirit of freedom, courage and change.

It challenged us to face our anxieties, and to confront, articulate and rebel against the polymorphous absurdities permeating modern culture.

The existential spirit of rebellion merged with, and helped inspire, the Spirit of the Sixties. Humanistic psychology encouraged self-actualization, promoting the ideal of existential authenticity.

As humanistic psychology merged into the human potentiality movement, the awesome exploration of outer space was counterbalanced by a generation committed to exploring inner space.

This laid the foundation for the emergence of the transpersonal revolution, in which multimodal functioning coalesced with ethical commitment to ecological sanity and non-violent, egalitarian, world community.

1. **Holistic Thinking**

The transpersonal movement combines the findings of relativity theory, quantum physics, and cognitive and developmental psychology with a deep investigation of, and respect for, the heretofore untapped wisdom of aboriginal, shamanic and mystic traditions, coinciding with an increasingly widespread study and practice of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Zen.

In particular, the emergence of Tibetan Buddhism on the world scene, and the Dalai Lama’s winning the Nobel Peace Prize, brought transpersonal investigations to a new, more energized, more collective level.

All these elements gave rise to a new sense of what Aldous Huxley called “tempered optimism.”

Anderson makes a telling point: “Physics and psychology: these two disciplines might seem entirely irrelevant to one another – and are still protected from illicit intercourse in academia – but they have much to say about how we experience the world, and [the time has come to] allow both voices to be heard in the same room.” (94)

In his chapter on the impact on psychology of relativity theory and quantum mechanics, Anderson quotes Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics*: “The classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian partition between the I and the world, between the observer and the observed, cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter.” (95)

This is a scientific affirmation of the major insight of Immanuel Kant’s philosophic climax to the Enlightenment, his 1781 publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (appearing in a slightly revised second edition in 1787). Postmodern physics can no longer deny that experimental observation influences the data observed.

Early in the 20th century, it was shown that atoms appear as either particles or waves depending on the experimental set-up. This is called the wave-particle paradox. Meanwhile, Capra’s reference to “atomic matter” might be better phrased as “subatomic energetic probability patterns.”

Anderson elaborates Capra’s scientific affirmation of Buddhist psycho-cosmological interbeing by quoting Albert Einstein:

“A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the ‘Universe,’ a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison …. Our task must be to free ourselves.” (85)

Einstein here implicitly declares that postmodern physics confirms the psychology and metaphysics underlying Plato’s cave parable.

Anderson draws the conclusion relevant to contemporary transpersonal psychology and philosophy: “The house of consciousness [the paradigm or model of subjectivity] is continually being rebuilt, and at the present time – with science in the midst of an intense surge of cosmological discovery and theory-building – our concept of self is an open question in a way it has never been before.” (95-96)

Postmodern cosmology is counter-intuitive and mind-bending. Anderson continues: “Theological creation stories a la Genesis are weird; … mythological stories are weird; and scientific stories are *really* weird.” (98)

This weirdness – actually a new paradigm of common sense, to which culture must in time catch up – has been present in science and philosophy for over a hundred years, as evidenced by the publication in the early the 20th century of Henri Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* and Alfred North Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*.

Contrary to classical physics, and more or less simultaneous with William James’ stream-theory of consciousness, Bergson, a French philosopher, showed that time is “durational flow,” not a succession of instantaneous instants.

Bergson’s Jamesian, post-Newtonian conception of temporality was simultaneously promulgated by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, in his “phenomenology of internal time consciousness.”

Shortly thereafter, Whitehead showed that evolution is a necessary cosmological counter-thrust to entropy.

Anderson observes that “Capra’s book, *The Tao of Physics*, first published in the mid-1970s, was for many people the first stunning introduction to the idea that [postmodern physics is] … in some ways remarkably similar to ideas about the universe found in Eastern disciplines such as Buddhism. But, as Capra pointed out, … leading nuclear physicists such as J. Robert Oppenheimer and Neils Bohr had been thinking in that direction since the 1950s.” (103)

Neils Bohr, famous for The Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics – which combines wave-particle “complementarity” with Werner Heisenberg’s 1927 Uncertainty Principle – was awarded a Danish knighthood in 1947 for his work in quantum mechanics.

Einstein, unhappy with The Uncertainty Principle in physics, famously declared: “God does not roll dice.” But The Uncertainty Principle – another name for quantum probability patterns – has been shown to be correct.

Meanwhile, Bohr, in designing a family coat of arms to go with the acceptance of his prestigious award, included in it the Tao sign, along with the Latin words for: “Contraries are complementary.” In other words: Quantum mechanics requires dialectical thinking.

Dialectical thinking – symbolized by the Tao sign, where yin and yang, seeming opposites, are contained within each other – is also ingredient in Jungian psychology, especially in Jung’s interpretation of alchemy and dreams.

Dialectical thinking, the alternative to either/or, is not hard to understand. It is manifest in the everyday experience which psychology calls “the approach-avoidance conflict.” I can want the ice cream and not want it at the same time. I can love and hate my lover simultaneously. I can, coherently, be proud of my country and thoroughly ashamed of it.

In physics, I can think of “atoms” as waves *or* particles, even though waves and particles are mutually exclusive notions. Emotionally, the heart is a many-chambered matrix of conflicting desires; this is, quite simply, an existential, paradoxical, dialectical fact, not a contradiction.

Dialectical thinking, therefore, ought to be integrated into every school’s curriculum, and should become an essential part of what Francis Bacon called the common “marketplace of ideas.” Political and religious sophistry would then be easier to detect, and much less persuasive.

In successfully negotiating the paradox that individuality both is and is not factually valid, transpersonal psychology and philosophy overlap with quantum dialectics, and have the added virtue of energizing paradox as a necessary mode of thought. Anderson makes the point quite nicely: “You don’t need a Ph.D. in physics to join the post-Newtonian universe.” (105)

Evolution – biological, personal, collective, cosmological – is now wedded to the notion of interbeing. Anderson notes: “You don’t need a telescope to look at the mysterious and still evolving cosmos; you can try a mirror.” (106) I would only add: ‘And there is no better mirror than meditation.’ Buddha’s meditation under the bodhi tree led to his enlightenment. What he discovered is that everything is multimodal, alive, evolving, interconnected.

Interconnectedness is another name for interbeing. Interbeing is another name for quantum entanglement. Quantum entanglement is another name for what passes in post-Newtonian physics as nonlocality. Nonlocality names the astonishing fact that “atomic particles” are instantaneously influenced by each other, even at astronomical distances. “Instantaneous,” of course, means faster than light. Nonlocality, therefore, is not only post-Newtonian; it is post-Einsteinean.

Anderson notes that “nonlocality is now accepted [by most physicists] as a fact of nature, and it may be, as one observer has suggested, ‘the most profound discovery in all of science.’” (107)

Even stranger, physicists are beginning to employ the existential language of “nothingness,” called in Buddhism “emptiness,” and in Taoism and Zen “the great void.” Alan Watts, bridging Buddhism, Taoism and science, offered the immortal quip: “Nothingness is uncommonly frisky.”

In his chapter on “The Mysterious Material Mind,” Anderson suggests that we integrate into our vocabulary – as a fundamental concept-cluster in our interpretive belief-system – three interdependent words: change, continuity and complexity.

To appreciate the importance of Anderson’s trinity, let’s pause to revel in Oscar Wilde’s satirical insight: “The pure and simple truth is hardly pure, and never simple.”

This is dialectical thinking at its best. It befits, of course, an author who was a master of irony. Meanwhile, we need to unpack the word “continuity.” It means both pattern persistence and interbeing; i.e., coherence and connectedness.

Anderson’s transpersonal point is that change, continuity and complexity apply to: 1) the universe as a whole; 2) the individual person in relation to the universe; 3) the internal sociality of ego-identity.

Let us recall that transpersonalism – a still emerging, open ended, non-dogmatic, multidisciplinary, multicultural paradigm – has the metaphoric equivalent of two poles: horizontal and vertical. The vertical pole intuits, and seeks to systematize, a spiritual hierarchy of interconnected beings. It leans toward the idealist assertion of the primacy of mind over matter, and sees the latter as an epiphenomenon of the creative energy of the former.

The horizontal pole is, as it were, more down to earth. It sees the body-brain-mind gestalt of individual personhood as resulting from, and interconnected with, biological evolution, social interbeing, and the global biosphere.

It may lean toward a materialist conception of reality, in which mentality and emotion result from neurological impulses. Or it may lean toward a broader worldview, beyond materialist reductionism; that is to say, it may embrace the full spectrum of human thought, feeling, symbolism, art, culture and values, without, however, going that extra vertical step into spirituality.

Both poles, the vertical and the horizontal, assert something like a “unified field theory” which overcomes Cartesian dualism (Descartes’ absolute distinction between mental substance and material substance). Descartes theorized that mind and body are connected by the pineal gland, which synthesizes bodily sensations into neurologically generated images which are then apprehended by the soul.

Descartes, writing in the early 17th century, bequeathed to modern philosophy “the mind-body problem” of “dualism,” which subsequent philosophers – divided into in two competing camps: empiricist and rationalist, or materialist and idealist – sought to overcome in a variety of ways.

Empiricist philosophy is usually thought to be epitomized by Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Idealist philosophy is usually thought to be epitomized by Spinoza and Leibniz, supplemented by Kant’s “critical idealism” (a synthesis of empiricist and rationalist paradigms) and Hegel’s “absolute” or “speculative idealism.”

Bishop Berkeley is also often thought to be a member of this latter, idealist group, given his most famous assertion: “*esse est percipi*” – “to be is to be perceived.”

Post-Cartesian philosophers were never happy with Descartes’ postulation of the pineal gland as the place where mind and body meet and are mutually influential.

Locke and Hume sought to overcome mind-body dualism by distinguishing between sensations and impressions, primary and secondary qualities, and negotiating the distinction between simple and complex ideas (the latter built from the former, with lots of room for mistaken inference along the way).

Spinoza – the “god-intoxicated” philosopher who was, ironically, banished from his Dutch Hebrew congregation for being an atheist and mechanistic determinist – postulated a single, divine substance, a “monism,” with two “modes,” mental and physical. Leibniz – who invented the calculus for which we, not mistakenly, normally give credit to Newton; who spoke of an evolving universe; and who postulated a theory of divine “psycho-physical parallelism” in “the best of all possible worlds” lampooned in Voltaire’s *Candide* – postulated a theory of infinitely reflecting “monads” which echoes Indra’s net in Hinduism, the *Flower Garland Sutra* of Buddhism, Whitehead’s process philosophy, and universal quantum entanglement in postmodern physics.

The horizontal pole of transpersonalism extends the empiricist and socio-biological paradigm into the 21st century, building upon philosophic and scientific advances in such a way as to avoid *simplistic* reductionism. Change, continuity and (perhaps especially) *complexity* are now ingredient in postmodern philosophic and scientific worldviews.

Mind may be an epiphenomenon of matter, but matter is now understood as an awesomely complex (and still mysterious) matrix of energetic and interconnected change and continuity. Einstein showed that matter is energy, and exactly what “energy” is is still being debated. Hence the title of Anderson’s chapter: “The Mysterious Material Mind.”

1. **The Social Self**

Anderson quotes Michael Gazzaniga’s *The Social Brain*: “Metaphorically, we humans are more of a sociological entity than a single unified psychological entity.” (118) He then quotes E. O. Wilson: “There is no single stream of consciousness in which all information is brought together by an executive ego.” (119) Anderson extrapolates from Gazzaniga, Wilson, William James and the Buddha, and paraphrases a major insight of Gestalt psychology and “family systems therapy.” He says:

“Our streams of consciousness … don’t really run … smoothly down the hill. … Cognition tends to be … more like what Asian traditions call the ‘monkey mind,’ … leaping about crazily from [from limb to limb or] tree to tree … periodically forgetting what it was up to a minute before.” (121)

Anderson is here emphasizing the internal sociality of the psyche so crucial to transpersonal psychology. He notes that “psychotherapy … is essentially an attempt to help the client edit his or her internal autobiography …” (122)

Anderson continues: “Contemporary schools of psychology are intensely interested in describing not only the personality but also the various *sub*personalities that also make themselves heard in our daily experience of life … [i.e., the] varied voices that at different times speak internally with the authoritative voice of ‘I.’” (122)

Transpersonal psychology is here building on Roberto Assagioli’s therapeutic model of “psyschosynthesis,” and on the multiple influence of “archetypal forces” in psychic functioning to which Jung devoted his clinical and authorial career. The paradigm suggested might thus be called “the dialogical model of the psyche.”

Kenneth Gergen’s *The Saturated Self* calls the *breakdown* of relative coherence of ego functioning – the *dis*integration of a relatively sane and healthy negotiation of internal voices and dramas – “multiphrenia.” This appears to be an increasingly emerging and widespread social syndrome.

Anderson quotes Gergen to illustrate the point: “Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self. For everything we ‘know to be true’ about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision.” (122)

Anderson adds the comment (reminiscent of Julian Jaynes’ *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*): “I suspect that the internal consciousness of human beings has always been a babble of voices more than a single stream of consciousness.” (123)

He quotes Tibetan explorer Alexandra David-Neel: “A ‘person’ resembles an assembly composed of a number of members.” (123) Buddhism describes this “assembly” as an intricate and often conflicting set of “sanskaric dispositions,” also called *veshana*: “habit energies.”

Tor Norretranders, a European science journalist, notes in his book *Cutting Consciousness Down to Size*: “The estimate for unconscious processing appears to be on the order of ten billion bits a second, whereas conscious experience processes something like tent to thirty bits a second.” (*The Next Enlightenment*, 124)

Anderson summarizes: “Consciousness is far from being the totality of our mental activity, and in some ways looks more like the minority partner …. The revised view of the unconscious is especially important …. The unconscious is now taken to be a much larger portion of our total mental activity [than is normally assumed], and it is not only larger but also in some ways smarter and more rational than Freud indicated.” (124) This latter point emphasizes a major reason Jungian psychology evolved so much further beyond Freud’s.

1. **Jung and Psyche**

Jung intuited, although he never systematically developed, a major insight dawning in transpersonal psychology: the unconscious is in fact a consciousness.

This insight is the fertile ground out of which the transpersonal vertical tree grows.

Apart from Freud’s authoritarian dogmatism, neurotic eroticism, and temperamental pessimism, his major mistake was to transform an adjective into a noun. Having discovered that the ego is “unconscious” of forces operating behind its back – below the level of egoic awareness – Freud assumed that there must be a subterranean psychic domain where these forces (“instincts” and repressed “complexes”) operate. He called this domain the id. Since the ego is “unconscious” of the energies operating in the id, he called the id “*the* unconscious.”

The word “unconscious” was thus transformed from an *adjective*, describing an essential aspect of ego, into a descriptive noun naming a primary and largely independent *system* of the psyche: a seething cauldron of “blind” and “amoral” instincts, compulsions and complexes.

Jung’s advance was to intuit that the so-called “unconscious” may in fact be conscious, soulful, teleological, wise.

Sparsely scattered through Jung’s voluminous writings are the occasional admission that the unconscious is, and must be, a consciousness. Jung was still too much under the influence of scientism and Freud to develop this intuition. He did, however, place the “Self” at the center of his archeological portrait of the psyche, knowing full well that his concept of “Self” was another name for “soul,” but not wanting to use the word “soul” because of its Judeo-Christian theological baggage.

It has been left to transpersonal psychology to blend the Jungian notion of “Self” – an individualized fragment of the “archetypes of the collective unconscious” – with postmodern quantum entanglement and the Platonic-Buddhist concept of *a priori* enlightenment.

Freud, it may safely be said, was still far too Newtonian in his thinking. Unlike Freud, Jung was a deep and serious student of early 20th century quantum mechanics and relativity theory. At its core, and in its reach, Jungian psychology is post-Newtonian, hence “postmodern,” reflecting psychologically the quantum leaps in Einstein’s astonishingly imaginative scientific breakthroughs.

In sum: the “mysterious *material* mind,” once its doors of perception have been cleansed, opens to the vertical multidimensionality of spirituality. In precisely this sense, then, the vertical pole of transpersonal psychology may be called: The Inner Space Program.

To quote the (unwittingly Buddhist) Presocratic Heraclitus, with echoes of Kierkegaard’s “infinite inwardness” – “No matter how far you travel, you never reach the end of psyche.”

The internal sociality of the self is key to the relatively new, evolving paradigm of personhood, of egoic identity, as a partly coherent flux of interactive multiplicity. Quantum physics considers the “location” of an atom “distributed” throughout its wave pattern until experimental adjustments “collapse the wave-function” into localized particularity.

Borrowing from the language of physics, cognitive and developmental psychology now speak of “the distributed self.”

With what Nietzsche calls “ears behind the ears,” a humanistic or transpersonal psychotherapist is sensitive to, and respectful of, the different voices, the different and often competing personality fragments, which might speak through the client in a given session.

1. **Constructivism**

The construction of self-identity goes hand in hand with the construction of a worldview, and both evolve in the maturing individual seeking to maximize their humanity.

Says Anderson: “Every step you take toward understanding how your mind takes an active part in the construction of reality is a step along the path of personal growth. And every step that every person takes advances the evolution of humanity as a whole beyond the grip of the unyielding doctrines [the “lunatic logic” and “geriatric dogmas”] that have caused untold suffering in the world.” (128)

Transpersonal awareness apprehends the constructivist interaction of self and world as a holistic process. Anderson notes that “it is hardly surprising that people who have had enlightenment experiences often report a deeply felt recognition that the inside-outside distinction, so central to commonsense understanding, misrepresents what we really are – all of us, all the time – which is a meaningful and ever-changing interaction between ourselves and our surrounding environment.” (155-156) He continues: “A culture of liberation [encourages] us … to grow up *into* the universe and *let go* of our idea of ourselves as skin-encapsulated egos.” (159) The fate of the world now hinges on the battle between “the culture of attachment” and “the emerging enlightenment project.” (160)

Anderson again makes a telling point: “Most identities are completely symbolic [and socially conditioned]. … There is much wisdom in the old European saying that defines a nation as a group of people united by a common hatred of their enemies and a common mistake about their own ancestry.” (170) He then draws the necessary conclusion: “I propose that the path toward a more civilized world lies not [so much] in our deciding to be really good toward people of different groups – racial, religious, whatever – but in recognizing the trivial and arbitrary nature of all such identity categories.” (171)

Alan Watts exhibits an insight as relevant to fervent patriotism as it is to religious conviction: “Irrevocable commitment to any religion is not only intellectual suicide; it is positive unfaith because it closes the mind to any new vision of the world. Faith is, above all, open-ness – an act of trust in the unknown.” (173)

Anderson elaborates: “Liberation [from the social conditioning Erich Fromm calls “chains of illusion”] requires a willingness to live in a universe not fully explained – perhaps not even explainable.” (174)

Anderson quotes the Buddha:

“Believe nothing merely on the authority of … teachers or … priests. After examination, believe that which you have tested for yourselves and found reasonable, which is in conformity with your well-being *and* that of others.” (189; emphasis mine)

Transpersonal awareness, informed by the findings of constructivism, conducts itself in a spirit of modesty, generosity, interbeing, and, indeed, gratitude for the infinity of mystery. Buddha, Whitehead and Watts agree: Dogmatism is the death of philosophy, science and spirituality.

Anderson observes: “No … tradition has … infallible capacity to guide all individuals …. All enlightenment traditions are a part of the evolutionary process, and are themselves in the process of evolution.” (239)

1. **The Politics of Experience**

In 1967, Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing published his iconoclastic and remarkably popular book, *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*. His use of the word “transpersonal” helped the term become part of the discourse of the psychological community.

Laing was a deeply perceptive, prescient, Nietzschean critic of the modern world, analyzing psychiatrically and poetically contemporary culture’s nuclear, ecological, social, political and religious absurdities.

Laing put *experience* at the center of his philosophic psychology. For Laing, experience is not reducible to matter in motion; is not quantifiable in laboratory experiments; and is, today, largely a function of social *dys*function. *The Politics of Experience* offers a profoundly poignant description of modern society as a high-tech version of Plato’s cave; a society in which citizens take the moral and mental midgetry of their political leaders – and their own fear fraught, consumer driven, advertising drenched, media manipulated, spiritually infantilized, violent prone, alienated, love-warped, scapegoating, schizoid lunacy – as normalcy.

In the words of John Lennon: “They torture and scare you for twenty odd years, then they expect you to pick a career.”

Laing was an existentialist not only in his analysis of alienation and The Absurd, he partook of the spirit of existential philosophy in borrowing Nietzsche’s aphoristic style, and going beyond academia to reach the wider public, similar to the way Sartre and Camus had done with their novels and plays.

Laing, like Jung, was a “depth psychologist,” an existential/humanistic psychotherapist, a forerunner of the human potentiality movement, and one of the earliest voices of the transpersonal revolution.

In *The Politics of Experience* (Penguin Books; England; 1967), Laing asserts: “The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one’s mind, is the condition of the normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus be normal. Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years.”

He notes: “We all live under the constant threat of our own annihilation. Only by the most outrageous violation of ourselves have we achieved our capacity to live in relative adjustment to a civilization apparently driven to its own destruction.”

He quips playfully despairingly: “Insanity – a perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world.”

He observes: “We are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as love.”

He says further:

Our alienation goes to the roots. The realization of this is the essential springboard for any serious reflection on any aspect of present inter-human life. Viewed from different perspectives, construed in different ways and expressed in different idioms, this realization unites men as diverse as Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Tillich and Sartre. (p. 12)

An intensive discipline of unlearning is necessary for *anyone* before one can begin to experience the world afresh, with innocence, truth, and love. (22-23)

The experience of being the actual medium for a continual process of creation takes one past all depression or persecution or vain glory, past, even, chaos or emptiness, into the mystery of that continual flip of non-being into being, and can be the occasion of that great liberation when one makes the transition from being afraid of [nothingness], to the realization that there is nothing to fear. Nevertheless, it is very easy to lose one’s way at any stage, and especially when one is nearest. (36)

From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth-century mother, the baby is subjected to … forces of violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of [the child’s] potentialities.

This enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves. A half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is normality in our present age. (50)

We are as deeply afraid to live and to love as we are to die. (64)

We are driving our children mad more effectively than we are genuinely educating them. Perhaps it is our very way of educating them that is driving them mad. (87)

True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality: the emergence of the ‘inner’ archetypal mediators of divine power, and through this death a rebirth, and the eventual re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer. (119)

We are not able even to *think* adequately about the behaviour that is at the annihilating edge. But what we think is less than what we know: what we know is less than what we love: what we love is so much less than what there is. And to that precise extent we are so much less than what we are. Yet if nothing else, each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light, precipitated into the outer darkness. Who are we to decide that it is hopeless? (26)

In *The Politics of Experience*, *The Divided Self*, and *Knots*, Laing articulates the illusion of an isolated, skin-encapsulated, mostly head-centered, supposedly rational ego. He argues for the *intrapersonal sociality* of the self as indivisible from our necessarily *interpersonal* experience. Our experience of ourselves is always largely a function of our experiential being-with-others.

Laing shows how we tie ourselves up in mental and emotional knots, alienated from our natural, social, and cosmological interbeing by a massively dysfunctional culture. Thus his Socratic, Buddhist, existential, transpersonal emphasis on *unlearning* our socially conditioned belief system and impulsive emotional responses.

Alan Watts and R. D. Laing met. They agreed: You have to lose your mind to come to your senses.

Laing invites us to break the dehumanizing chains of illusion inherited from Francis Bacon’s “scientific” methodology, which banished consciousness – the primary fact of human experience – from the “objectively real.” Bacon said nature was like a woman: mysterious, elusive, free. The task of science, he said, is to capture this “at large” creature, and to “torture” nature’s secrets from her. The language was typically Baconian; as Lord Chancellor of England, he signed the papers that justified the torture of prisoners.

Giordarno Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 by the Church for supplementing his mathematically detailed astronomical observations with transpersonal speculations anticipating contemporary multiverse theory. Bruno argued that different planets, galaxies and even universes could well be “peopled” with intelligent life forms utterly different from our own.

Bruno offered an alternative to the Baconian, Galilean, Newtonian paradigm of a blind, lifeless, mechanistic universe of matter in motion: a universe in which the *really real* was *only* that which could be *objectively measured* (by a subjectivity that was itself immeasurable, and was, ironically, doing the measuring). By offering *experience* a living place in cosmic reality, Bruno was, as it were, a strange tribe unto himself; an island of sanity in a sea of intolerance. Laing suggests that Western culture, without knowing it, desperately needs to return to Bruno’s prophetic genius, and to recognize our tragically mistaken turn toward scientific reductionism.

Laing argues that, individually and collectively, we need to cease believing the alienating myths of culture – scientific, economic, religious, political – and, as Kant said, dare to think for ourselves.

The choice is simple: munchkin versus *Ubermensch.*

1. **Multiple Intelligence**

Laing – like Huxley, Watts and Maslow – embodied the Spirit of The Sixties. He argued that we need to realize, nourish and cultivate our untapped potential for intelligence. And, he argued, intelligence comes in many forms.

Transpersonal psychology –which integrates cognitive and developmental psychologies – includes in its general discourse on personal evolution Howard Gardner’s “frames of mind,” which articulates seven kinds of human intelligence.

Gardner’s cognitive paradigm is known as “the theory of multiple intelligence.”

The average person tends to be gifted, or dominant, in one or two forms of intelligence – for example: logical, mathematical, musical – and less adept with the others.

Gardner’s theory is essentially an elaboration of Jung’s notion of four functions: rational, emotive, intuitive and sensory. Jungian “individuation” – psychic maturation, overlapping with Assagioli’s “psychosynthesis” and Maslow’s “self-actualization” – involves becoming increasingly adept in all four functions.

In transpersonal psychology, borrowing from Gardner’s exploration of “frames of mind,” the evolution of one’s full human potential involves increasing talent in the utilization of multiple-intelligence-functioning. The ideal of a fully self-actualized person is someone equally competent in all seven kinds of natural human intelligence.

In transpersonal psychology, this increasing set of aptitudes, which might be called hyper-functioning, carries one beyond the self-limiting concepts of socially conditioned ego-identity, into meta-personal realms of experience, where the increasingly “healthy” ego expands into ever-expanding arenas of empathy, intuition, compassion, competence, creativity, learning, and service.

This is fully detailed in Mahayana and Tantric Buddhist psychology, where the paradigm of egoic evolution into the fully lived life of spiritual awareness – Buddhahood or Christ-consciousness – is articulated in the eight or eleven stages of a budding *Bodhisattva*, evolving toward becoming a Buddha: one who is fully “awake,” nirvanically *in* the world, an egoic embodiment of divine love, wisdom, competence and bliss.

In *The Tao Physics*, Fritjof Capra observes: “Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science; but humans need both.”

In *Modes of Thought*, Alfred North Whitehead remarks: “In order to acquire learning, we must first shake ourselves free of it. Importance arises from fusion of the finite and the infinite.”

To catch glimpses of the infinite in one’s daily experience, it is best to remember that “death is our wisest advisor.” Realizing that tomorrow is not guaranteed, and that today could in fact be one’s last, flavors the daily experience of life with awe, wonder, mystery and gratitude. One ceases to waste the precious gift of life with time spent in superficial distractions, negative thought-forms, and self-defeating emotions.

Transpersonal experience is also intensified by assuming the stance of The Witness. This is the art and practice of detachment, of being in the world but not of it – *playfully*.

It is viewing life as a play – what the Hindus call “lila” – and thereby consistently remembering the likely truth: We are not humans having a spiritual experience, we are spirits having a human experience. This relates to the Buddhist notion of maya.

Maya does not mean that the world is illusion. It means that *the person* who thinks the world as it appears is the only and final reality is in fact a person in a self-reinforcing hallucinatory state, exactly parallel to the fact that when one is dreaming one thinks the dream is reality.

Awakening from dreaming is exactly parallel to both enlightenment and death. Mastering the art of the Witness Stance is – like lucid dreaming – the actual practice of enlightenment, and preparation for an easy, smooth, peaceful transition when the time comes to shuffle off the mortal coil.

Transpersonal psychology, insofar as it favors the idea that consciousness – mind, psyche or spirit – creates material forms for the sake of evolution, thereby embraces the idea that life and matter are imbued with value and purpose. This is a basic tenet of the perennial philosophy. Accordingly, transpersonal experience provides a progressive sense of being at home in the world. One sees life, the world as such, as an arena – a creative playground – for evolving consciousness.

The transpersonal vision defines altered states of consciousness as break*through* rather than break*down*; although, of course, breakthrough entails the breakdown of socially conditioned egoic barriers and assumptions.

1. **Multimodal Functioning**

Transpersonal awareness is enhanced by the recognition of what Jung calls “synchronicity.” The more one is alert to and respectful of synchronicity, the more it occurs. This goes hand in hand with learning to recognize and respect ciphers, omens and symbols in one’s daily experience: the whisperings of spirit; nature’s subtle clues; communications from the cosmos. Transpersonal experience is intensified by active and persistent experimentation with paranormal and shamanic psycho-technologies, including astrology, tarot, psychometry, *I Ching*, chakra vitalization, auras, and flashes of reincarnational recall. With careful and skillful cultivation of paranormal techniques, the transpersonal personality becomes increasingly competent in accessing the multimodal and navigating the transcendent.

The individuating transpersonality – the Toltec “warrior on the path of knowledge” – becomes increasingly shamanic and telepathic.

The transpersonal paradigm defines Mind as more expansive and inclusive than consciousness. Consciousness is an aspect, a highly specialized and focused version, of Mind. If Mind is imaged as a rainbow, consciousness is simply one color in the spectrum. If Mind is imaged as a prism, Spirit may be imaged as the light which passes through it, creating the rainbow which includes the color “consciousness,”

The transpersonal personality – the embodied spiritualized ego – still experiences normal, everyday reality, but with a paranormal perspective, a certain distance, a Witness Stance, which allows that experience to be perceived as relative, contingent, diaphanous, instead of absolute and final.

The enlightenment adventure inevitably involves encounter with what, in the world’s various mystic and spiritual traditions, is called The Dweller on the Threshold. This is a fancy term for what Jung calls The Shadow: the dark side of the self; our unresolved neuroses and negative tendencies.

The Dweller on the Threshold may be encountered many times. A standard mythic motif is the slaying of a dragon. A variation on this motif is the Greek legend of Theseus descending into the labyrinth (symbol of the psyche) and encountering the Minotaur.

The same lesson is represented in Buddhist iconography in a variety of terrifying, devouring images. But since The Shadow – the dragon or monster – is part of the psyche, “slaying” actually signifies “transformation.” The task is not so much to kill The Shadow as to tame it. The negative energy knotted up in The Shadow is released for positive, shamanic, spiritual purposes.

A related idea is that *a broken heart is an open heart*. As long meditation or successful psychotherapy makes clear: sorrow is the root of anger, and anger is the cause of violence. Transforming anger into empathy and compassion – overcoming the temptation to violence – is the spiritual lesson on the path to enlightenment.

This is not to say that we should not be outraged at the world’s pervasive injustice.

It *is* to say that peace-making requires becoming at peace with ourselves.

World peace will not come from those who hate war; it will come from those who love peace.

In short: violence is distorted compensation for sorrow. Sorrow’s twisted and most self-defeating temptation is hatred. Hatred binds us emotionally to our enemies and causes their perpetual return. The function of their return is to teach us to stop hating.

A broken heart may clench, and seek sublimation in anger, resentment and violence; or, a broken heart may teach necessary karmic lessons, and lead to opening into ever greater empathy, compassion, patience and tenderness.

A broken heart has as its ultimate lesson the teaching of the karmic rebound effect: those who inflict pain are doomed to suffer it.

Experience is, or ought to be, enlightening. Karma is the lesson. Karma means creativity. The lesson is: creating responsibly. Life is challenge and response.

Transpersonal philosophy teaches that ego’s emergence was necessary, but ego’s destiny is to transcend itself.

Ego’s emergence was necessary for the move from superstition to rationality; but rationality divorced from the heart leads to The Wasteland. This was Parsifal’s hard-earned lesson in the Arthurian legend of the Holy Grail. Thus Joseph Campbell asserts that the Parsifal story is now the world’s most important mythic motif.

1. **Buddha and *The Gita***

Transpersonal techniques help us to overcome the temptations of violence; penetrate to the inner meaning of anger; sink into the depths of our sorrow; then sink deeper yet into the oceanic ecstasy which Huxley calls the Divine Ground: the creative matrix of existence.

Buddha stressed that we are already enlightened; already in nirvana; already permeated by grace and bliss, through and through. Asked if he was a god, Buddha said no. Asked if he was a man, Buddha said no. Asked what he was, Buddha said: “Awake.”

Transpersonal philosophy and psychology – including Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, Toltec shamanism, and Judeo-Christian esotericism – echo the wisdom of *The Bhagavad Gita*.

In the “Introduction” to his translation and commentary on the *Gita*, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan – a scholar, mystic and enlightened statesman, who was President of India during the war-torn years of 1962 to 1967 – says: “The *Bhagavadgita* is both metaphysics and ethics, *brahmavidya* and *yogasastra*, the science of reality and the art of union with reality.” (Harper Colophon; New York; 1948, 1973; p. 12)

He continues: “We must cleanse the mind of … distraction and purge the heart from … corruption to acquire spiritual wisdom.” (12)

He quotes Aldous Huxley: “The *Bhagavadgita* is perhaps the most systematic spiritual statement of the Perennial Philosophy.” (12)

The *Gita* can, of course, be read as incomplete and deficient, inasmuch as Krishna convinces Arjuna to go into battle at the end. Arjuna is persuaded by his charioteer, the god Krishna, to fulfill his dharma, his caste-born duty as warrior-king. This is precisely what Buddha renounced. Buddhism was, thus, for its time, revolutionary, Siddhartha showing a self-exploring, self-enlightened, peace-loving alternative to duty-bound fatalism. Buddha undermined the caste-ridden, violence-prone, fatalistic definition of dharma then dominant in Hindu India. Buddha offered a deeper, more Socratic definition of dharma: the duty to achieve enlightenment, the two wings of which are wisdom and compassion.

The *Gita* may be read, like the *Tao Te Ching*, on three levels: personal, social, and cosmological. It may *also* be read, most importantly, as an Upanishadic anticipation of Buddha’s own most profound teachings. This is the virtue of Radhakrishnan’s commentary, which draws parallels with the wisdom of the West.

Thus, with regard to the wisdom and value of both meditative *and* dialogical silence, Radhakrishnan observes: “The Buddha maintained a calm silence when he was questioned about the nature of reality and nirvana. Jesus maintained a similar silence when Pontius Pilate questioned him as to the nature of truth.” (21)

Insofar as the *Gita* points the way to truth, it is as dialectical, as paradoxical, as the statements found in many Buddhist sutras. In this respect, it partakes of the spirit of Zen. Radhakrishnan illustrates the profundity of the *Gita*, its Upanishadic and Zen-like parallelism, by quoting the *Isa Upanishad*: “It [the “Supreme,” the ineffable, the ultimate, Brahman, Purushottama] does not move and yet it moves. It is far away and yet it is near.” (22)

As with Buddhism, the *Gita* celebrates freedom at the heart of creation. Says Radhakrishnan, in words that ring the transpersonal paradigm: “The alternative to a mechanical world is a world of risk and adventure.” (24)

Echoing Jesus and Buddha, Radhakrishnan elaborates the essential message of the *Gita*: “When any finite individual develops spiritual qualities and shows large insight and charity, he sits in judgment on the world and starts a spiritual and social upheaval and we say that God is born for the protection of the good … and the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness.” (32) Radhakrishnan is writing in 1948, the year Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated.

The *Gita* unites heaven and earth. Speaking again of the ultimate, of Brahman – paralleling Christian mysticism and Buddhism’s ineffable Dharmakaya – Radhakrishnan asserts: “Out of His love He is born again and again to renew the work of creation on a higher plane.” (33)

Reflecting Buddhism’s emphasis on the primacy of *shunyata*, the “great void” of Taoism and Zen, Radhakrishnan illustrates the *Gita’s* quantum dialectics: “Non-being is a necessary moment in reality for the unfolding of the Supreme. If the world is what it is, it because of the tension.” (39)

Echoing Empedocles and Heidegger, he says: “We cannot account for the fact of the world but can only construe its nature, which is a strife between being and non-being in the process of becoming.” (40)

Reflecting the Buddhist non-dual distinction between provisional and ultimate reality, Radhakrishnan says of the *Gita*: “There is no suggestion that … the objects produced by maya [the cosmic trick, the cosmic *lila*, the creative power of Brahman] … are *only* illusory.” (41; emphasis mine)

Affirming a basic Buddhist-Platonic tenet of the perennial philosophy – that value and purpose permeate reality – Radhakrishnan declares that, according to the teachings of the *Gita*, “there is an inner direction given to things by reason of their participation in the creative onrush of life.” (43)

Similar to Buddha and Nietzsche, he asserts: “As our purpose is, so is our life.” (45)

He says further: “Man is a complex multi-dimensional being, including within him different elements [the “five sheaths”] of matter, life, consciousness, intelligence and the divine spark. He is free when he acts from the highest level and uses the other elements for the realization his [highest] purpose.” (46) This is the essence of the *Gita*.

It is Buddhism in a seashell. It is a transpersonal articulation of the spiritualization of ego. Radhakrishnan’s gnostic hermeneutic would make William Blake and R. D. Laing smile: “The *Gita* affirms that there is no radical dualism between the supernatural and the natural.” (47) Expressing the essence of Buddhism, Vedantic Hinduism, Toltec shamanism, non-dual Judeo-Christian gnosticism, transpersonal psychology and Huxley’s “perennial philosophy,” Radhakrishnan concludes: “Wisdom is the direct experience which occurs as soon as obstacles to its realization are removed.” (52)

1. **Eye of Soul**

In *Original Blessing*, Matthew Fox reinterprets the heart of Christianity as saying that we are born in original blessing, not original sin. This coincides with the Qabalistic insights of Hebrew mysticism, which refers to our “Adamic being,” similar to Hinduism’s assertion that Atman, our true, original self, is one with Brahman, the ultimate, divine source of all being and becoming.

In *The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels shows that “the ‘living Jesus’ of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment [*gnosis*], not of sin and repentance.” (Vintage; New York; 1979, 1989; p. xx)

In *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm*, Ken Wilbur combines physics, philosophy and psychology to point the way to transpersonal spirituality. He borrows from St. Bonaventure the notion that humans are gifted with three eyes: sensory, reflective, and intuitive: the eye of flesh, the eye of mind, and the eye of soul.

The eye of flesh provides immediate knowledge of space, time, matter, sensation. The eye of mind is reflective, rational, speculative, imaginative.

The eye of soul is opening to infinite inwardness: intuitive, trans-logical, infused with spiritual illumination. Cultivation of soulful insight, of gnostic epiphany, has a long tradition in the West.

This tradition might be called “contemplative prayerfulness,” where “contemplation” is understood not so much as intellectual activity as mental quiescence and opening to the wisdom of the heart.

The wisdom of the heart is evidenced in “the jewel in the lotus” mantra of Buddhism: Om mani padme hum. “Mani” is the Sanskrit root of the words “man” and “mind.” Mentality is the distinguishing feature of humanity. Mentality makes language, technology and culture possible.

“Mani” also means “jewel.” “Padme” means both “lotus” and “heart.” Mani padme is the jewel in the lotus

Deepest spiritual insight occurs when the mind ceases its discursive ramblings and roots itself peacefully and lovingly in the wisdom of the heart.

This has its reflection in “the sacred heart” tradition of Christianity: a continuation of the love psalms of the Old Testament.

“Om” is the old Hindu word for “creative unity.” “Hum” exhibits “peaceful togetherness.” Creative unity and peace-loving togetherness go together in the human heart, which reflects the heart of the cosmos. When the mind unites with the wisdom of the heart – when the lotus of the heart opens to reveal its bejeweled wisdom – humans cease their war-making ways and come together in universal brother-sisterhood. This is the way of life of the bodhisattva, the authentic and ideal life described and praised in Mahayana Buddhism.

The meaning of life is learning and service, because wisdom and compassion are two names for the same. This is of course the root meaning of the word philosophy. In Greek, *Philos* is love; *Sophos* is wisdom. Love-wisdom is the essence of what Pythagoras practiced and preached.

If philosophy, as Plato and Aristotle both said, begins with awe and wonder, it is yet, ultimately, a question which returns itself to itself. This was the “Socratic turn” from the study of nature to the study of the psyche, wherein the most important knowledge is understood as virtue.

Socratic philosophizing is essentially ethical; and this is, I suggest, the spirit which infuses the essence of the transpersonal revolution.

If we picture a circle, and think of “revolution” as “revolving,” then the transpersonal revolution in philosophy and psychology is really a “return.” A return to what Trungpa calls “the sanity we were born with.”

The sanity we were born with is the jewel in the lotus: the wisdom of the heart.

If you don’t need a Ph.D. in physics to join the post-Newtonian world, it might equally be said that you don’t need to believe in the soul to be infused with a sense of the sacred. Awe and wonder will do.

This is why the horizontal pole of transpersonal psychology is as holistic and unifying as the vertical. Caring for each other and the earth is simple common sense: the only path to peace, and, today, our only hope for survival. This is why I refer to transpersonal psychology and philosophy as heart-centered rationality.

Reason is most reasonable when it points beyond itself to the epiphantic ineffability of the infinity of mystery.

Reason is most reasonable when it returns itself to itself with an awe-infused sense of gratitude and reverence. Gratitude and reverence are manifest in humility, modesty, simplicity, generosity.

Generosity is generative. It is the creativity which links past and future. In awe and reverence for the mystery of genesis, we can, and should, create a world of beauty and delight for all future generations. The transpersonal revolution returns us to the wisdom of the heart so that we may turn the wheel of our collective creativity to the peaceable kingdom our children deserve.

It is one thing to say we love our children; it is another thing to love the world in such a way as to provide every child the opportunity for the fullest actualization of their creative potential. This is, I suggest, the heart-centered inspiration, challenge and ideal of the transpersonal revolution.

1. **The Alchemy of Therapy**

A major clinical concern of transpersonal therapy is respecting the relationship between breakdown and breakthrough. The transpersonal clinical situation is ideally characterized by the therapist’s respect for:

1. The client’s personhood, dignity, holistic existential reality.
2. The likelihood of shamanic or initiatory illness.
3. The potentially healing breakdown as potential breakthrough.
4. Facilitation of ego-strength in conjunction with ego transcendence.

Respect for the client’s personhood means entering into a mutually trusting, I-Thou relationship. The therapist refuses to “pathologize” symptoms simply because those symptoms are culturally abnormal. Open hearted zenful presence is the art of what Carl Rogers humanistically called “client-centered therapy,” in which the therapist is existentially present to the client in a fully empathic and supportive role, without expectations and free of diagnostic bias.

Transpersonal experience is sometimes accompanied by what is called “shamanic or initiatory illness.” Such illness is to be respected as purgative preparation instead of a condition necessarily needing medication. “Initiatory illness” may often be accompanied by signs of kundalini rising. Kundalini is the fire energy dormant in the base of the spine.

When it rises upward through the other six chakras, kundalini awakening can feel like a nervous breakdown, energized by heat waves, sweating, vibratory trembling, and the spontaneous adopting of yogic gestures and postures. A transpersonal therapist needs to be fully versed in the chakra system, and fully knowledgeable and respectful of kundalini’s powerful, intense, energizing effects.

Egoic breakdown is rich with holistic, expansive, breakthrough possibilities, yet it can often be traumatic. Ken Wilbur suggests being wary of the “pre/trans fallacy.” Existential eruptions from the prepersonal or sub-egoic dimensions of the psyche ought not to be confused with – or reduced to – transpersonal multimodality; and transpersonal expansion of ego into new dimensions of experience ought not to be confused with – or reduced to – existential, emotional complexes. In other words, it is a fallacy to confuse the prepersonal and the transpersonal. The therapist must artfully distinguish between existential, egoic and multimodal; i.e., between prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal – and help the client negotiate their simultaneous claims to validity.

The transpersonal therapist is a Socratic midwife.

Ken Wilbur makes the point: “Most neurotics suffer not because of lack of ego-transcendence, but from the prior lack of ego-esteem, and therapy must be, first and foremost, the facilitator of strong ego-esteem, and then – but only then – the facilitator of ego-transcendence.” (“The Pre/Trans Fallacy,” *Paths Beyond Ego*, p. 129)

Cristina and Stanislav Grof assert:

The first and most important task for the facilitator working with individuals in transpersonal crisis is to establish a good trusting relationship with the client. On this basis it is then possible to mediate a new understanding of the process the client is involved in and to convey respect for its healing and transforming nature.

This approach is diametrically opposed to the traditional psychiatric strategy that uses pathological labels and an indiscriminate suppressive approach for all nonordinary states of consciousness. The basic principle of the new strategy is to support the process and to cooperate with it in order to utilize its positive potential. (“Spiritual Emergency: The Understanding and Treatment of Transpersonal Crises,” *Paths Beyond Ego*, p. 143)

Transpersonal adventures are by definition paranormal and extraordinary. They can be traumatic as well as epiphantic. One needs to be careful of what Jung calls “ego inflation.”

An inflated ego thinks it’s better than others, just because it’s different. This is the pride that goeth before the fall. Humility is the mark of enlightenment.

In his essay on “Assumptions of Transpersonal Psychotherapy,” Bryan Wittine observes:

If, in the course of therapy, the resistances and defenses of the lesser identity are gradually relinquished, clients are likely to enter a “dark night” or crisis of awakening [Shakespeare’s “tempest,” Jung’s “dark sea voyage of the soul”]. … St. John of the Cross called a similar transition the dark night of the senses and characterized it as a normal stage in spiritual growth …. It takes both an open heart and great skill to guide a client through the crisis of awakening. It is imperative that therapists realize *this is a healing crisis, not a pathological one*. The client is falling apart; however, this crisis also heralds the birth of a new person. I believe one of our greatest functions as therapists is to act as midwives to this birth. (*Paths Beyond Ego*, 169-170)

Hermes Trismegistus is thrice-majestic because he signifies the self-actualizing, Promethean, transpersonal ideal: shaman, healer, sage. In Jungian terms, Hermes Trismegistus is an archetype of the Guide and the Wise Old Man. The transpersonal therapist is shaman, healer and sage, guiding the client into their own *magna-anima*: their own thrice-great soulfulness.

1. **The Freud-Jung Dynamic**

Jung did the self-work necessary to evolve beyond Freud, and to help others, including Herman Hesse, through transpersonal crises and awakenings. The Freud-Jung relationship was archetypal in its intensity, setting the stage for 20th century psychology’s move from behavioral through depth and developmental to transpersonal.

The arc of 20th century psychology is in fact a seven phase process. This seven phase process may be anagrammed: B2DSECT.

B2DSECT names the evolution of Western psychology through seven schools.

*B2DSECT: The Seven Schools of 20th Century Psychology*

1. Behavioral
2. Depth
3. Developmental
4. Social
5. Existential
6. Cognitive
7. Transpersonal

“Creative evolution” hints at the quantum leaps in imagination at the turn of the century, Freud and Jung writing on the new science of psychology at the time of breakthroughs by Max Planck in physics, Igor Stravinsky in music, and William James and Henri Bergson in philosophy. The tension in the Freud-Jung relationship stirred its alchemical potential to explosion. The groundbreaking thunder of their six year collaboration was matched by the fury of their ensuing silence.

John Kerr describes the arc of the Freud-Jung dynamic:

Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung met for the first time on 3 March 1907 [in Freud’s house in Vienna, Jung’s companion, Ludwig Binswanger, shuffled off to spend time with Freud’s wife]. [Freud and Jung] talked for thirteen hours straight.

The last time the two men were together in the same room was at the Fourth International Psychoanalytic Congress, held in Munich on 6-7 September 1913. On that occasion, so far as is known, they said not a single word to each other. So it was in silence that one of the most vexed partnerships in the history of ideas ended.

Yet, working together for little more than six years, the two men decisively altered the course of twentieth-century thought. [*A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein*; Vintage; 1993, 1994; 3)

Richard Rorty, in his essay on “Freud and Moral Reflection,” reminds us to distinguish two senses of “the unconscious.” In the first sense, it is a libidinous cauldron of amoral instincts and drives. In the second sense, it is a social network of beliefs and desires; a creative set of subconscious identities, individually coherent but often in conflict with each other.

Rorty focuses on the second sense of “the unconscious,” giving Freud, quite rightly, credit for developing a social notion of self. Even more credit should be given to Jung and Assagioli. Rorty prefers Freud because he and Freud share an atheistic pragmatism. Jung’s notion of “Self” sounds too much like soul; and Assagioli has room for teleology and spirit in “psychosynthesis.” Freud and Rorty could never take the vertical step into the transpersonal worldview. Nevertheless, Rorty’s effusive description of the Freudian theater of the psyche rings with transpersonal implications:

What is novel in Freud’s view of the unconscious is his claim that our unconscious selves are not dumb, sullen, lurching brutes, but rather the intellectual peers of our conscious selves, possible conversational partners for those selves. As Rieff puts it, “Freud democratized genius by giving everyone a creative unconscious.”

This suggestion that one or more clever, articulate, inventive persons are at work behind the scene – cooking up our jokes, inventing our metaphors, plotting our dreams, arranging our slips, and censoring our memories – is what grips the imagination of the lay reader of Freud.

As Freud himself said, if psychoanalysis had stuck to the neuroses, it would never have attracted the attention of the intellectuals. It was the application of psychoanalytical notions to normal life that first suggested that ideas might call for a revision in our self-image.

… This application… substitutes a picture of sophisticated transactions between two or more “intellects” for the traditional picture of one “intellect” struggling with a mob of “irrational brutes.”

… A witty unconscious is necessarily a linguistic unconscious. … A witty unconscious is also a *rational* unconscious.

… We need to distinguish the unconscious as [in Freud’s words], “the deepest strata of our minds, made up of instinctual impulses,” strata that know “nothing that is negative, and no negation,” in which “contradictories coincide,” from the unconscious as the sensitive, whacky backstage partner who feeds us our best lines. (*Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers, Volume 2*; Cambridge; 1991; 2001; 149-150)

What Jung calls persona, anima, animus, and shadow, Rorty calls “crazy quasi people.” (150) Rorty pulls the curtain back on the epistemological drama, the magic theater, of the Freudian psyche; but he never quite sees what Jung saw, and what Laing, Huxley and Maslow illumined: the soulful component of the psyche, the whirling vortex at the core, which reconnects microcosm to macrocosm, the journey into which is often fraught with madness.

1. **Metamorphosis**

There is nothing romantic about madness, yet there is often genius at work. Jung had respect for that genius, and called it the Self.

Like Assagioli, Jung honored a basic tenet of transpersonal therapy: the therapist too is transformed. This takes trust; a willingness to be guided through a mutual process of becoming.

Soulful breakthrough – returning to the Self – is, in symbolic terms, the breaking of the alchemical egg. The function of psychic alchemy is the blossoming of what Taoism calls “the golden flower” of enlightenment.

In the background of Freud and Jung loom two figures: Nietzsche and Darwin. Through Nietzsche sings his muse, Emerson.

Emerson’s Oversoul arches forward to Jung’s archetypes of the collective unconscious, passion for mandalas, and intuition that the unconscious is a consciousness.

Through Nietzsche Goethe also speaks. Jung claims Goethe on his family tree.

In the background of Nietzsche and Darwin is the climactic Enlightenment figure, Immanuel Kant. Kant’s “second Copernican revolution” put mind in creative motion as Copernicus sent earth spinning through space.

Kant’s “second Copernican revolution” was the second turning of “the Socratic turn” in Western philosophy: the inward turn, toward psyche.

Kant’s “second Copernican revolution” placed a vibrating *creativity- gestalt* at the heart of human reality. This creativity-gestalt – the root meaning of *karma*, and the seed of “constructivism” – is Ariadne’s golden thread weaving its way through Nietzsche, Freud and Jung into Maslow and Laing, evolving from depth through humanistic into transpersonal psychology.

Kant’s trick in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to show the human psyche as creative agent in experience, constructing coherence from the flux. Kant articulates a universal and *a priori* epistemological gridwork. This hard-wired “transcendental” mechanism is made of 12 categories plus the two intuitions of space and time. The categories include unity, multiplicity, substance and causality. Kant thereby rescues science from Humean skepticism.

The mind’s *a priori* filter synthesizes raw sensory data streams into perception. The world appears as it does. Perception makes possible language, community and culture.

Constructivist psychology goes beyond Kant. Constructivism relativizes the gridwork. Constructivism offers a more Romantic anthropology, both internally and socially. Different cultures have different epistemologies, different worldviews, a different experience of being-in-the-world. Intrapsychically, constructivism invites wonder at the degree to which beliefs influence experience, and the degree to which meditative imagination catalyzes leap into transpersonal adventure.

Constructivist psychology is developmental. Developmental psychology, adumbrated in Janet, Piaget, Freud and Jung, evolves toward Sartre’s Promethean freedom and Maslow’s creative self-actualization.

Transpersonal psychology is the art and science of self-transcendence. It is fraught with intensity because that is the nature of the extraordinary. Precisely because of the pitfalls, the transpersonal is best handled with impeccability; the “worthy opponents” on the enlightenment adventure are best handled with a warrior’s “path with heart.”

This takes Darwinian evolution to a new level. Nietzsche offers glimpses with his gay-spirited *Ubermensch*. But what is this if not a Tibetan “recapturing the sanity we were born with;” the “crazy wisdom” of Zen; Ungon sweeping the path; Dogo fetching water; Bodhidharma floating to China on a willow stem. Goethe’s *Faust* is an updated version of *Ecclesiastes*. Both echo the life and death of Zen master Socrates.

Nietzsche’s inquiry into inquiry inspires Freud and Jung to an archeology of the psyche.

Traditional therapy brings to consciousness and untangles a complex web of contradictory, stress-inducing beliefs. Transpersonal psychology sees breakdown as breakthrough: the *dis*integration of egoic identity birthing *constructive integration* of a more diaphanous and fluid being-in-the-world.

The transpersonal therapist is a practitioner of the art, science and alchemy of psychic transformation. The therapist is playing the role of Hermes Trismegistus: shaman, healer, sage. The therapist will have gone through similar experiences; will have struggled with the same archetypal energies; will have been transformed and informed by more than one breakdown-breakthrough adventure.

Egoic breakdown is linked to creative breakthrough. It is seen as evolutionary sanity instead of pathology. Instead of medical suppression, egoic breakdown needs clinical guidance in the form of spiritual midwifery. The death of the caterpillar is the birth of the butterfly. Transpersonal therapy is Socratic, maieutic, alchemical. The therapist too is in the process of being transformed. Respect for the archetypal energies at work requires a mutual trust in transcendence; a willingness to let the energy be the guide and show its wisdom. The therapist brings to the I-Thou clinical situation a Zen presence; an intuitive openness; an empathic togetherness; a sense of irony, humor and wit; a sense of Socratic enthusiasm, as if together putting together the pieces of a puzzle and willing to enjoy surprise on the journey to emergence of the whole.

Heal, whole and holy have the same linguistic root. At the center of transpersonal psychology and philosophy is the beating heart of this archetypal triadic concept-cluster.

Destruction is the first step in the process of creation.

Healing often requires rupture. Breakdown is healing.

Healing is birthing. Birthing is holy.

The holy is increasing competence in navigating wholeness. Beyond solo serenade – out of Plato’s cave – into cellular and symphonic soul-fullness.

**Postscript: Cultivating Transpersonal Experience**

How do we translate thought into practice? Freud said: “Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious.” This is one of his wisest maxims. Keeping a dream journal is one of the best ways to access the wisdom-depths of the psyche. It stimulates a dialogue with the “nuclear self” or “soul.” Dream *interpretation* is the next step, with special attention to repetitive patterns. Dream *themes* are the key to the message. Suggest the kind of dreams you want to have as you’re falling asleep. Attempt “lucid dreaming” – waking up inside a dream and knowing that you are dreaming. Suggestions for achieving lucid dreaming are provided in books by Castaneda, Seth, and Stephen LaBerge.

In India, meditation is considered the “raja yoga” – the “royal road” to yoking ego to soul, and through the soul, as Emerson would say, to one’s Oversoul. Meditation is the art and practice of mental silence; this cultivates emotional equipoise. Meditation enables hearing one’s inner, intuitive voice: the whisperings of the soul. Cultivating the art of respecting this inner voice – what Socrates called his *daimon* – provides experiential verification of the transpersonal worldview.

Practice Jungian and Tantric “active imagination exercises,” including visualizations. Imagine yourself filled with light. Imagine yourself filled with rainbows.

Practice positive thinking and speaking.

Associate only with positive, creative, stimulating people.

Experiment with chanting and shamanic drumming.

Invent “affirmations” for frequent and easy reciting. For example:

1. Heart like a feather

Tethered to the Tao,

Dancing all day long

In the Longer Now.

1. Spirit goes before me

Making easy,

Smooth,

And perfect our way.

1. I am a golden glowing

Holy Grail overflowing

With rainbows

Of joy and peace.

1. I am the light,

I am filled with light,

I am filled to overflowing

With holy, healing

Delight.